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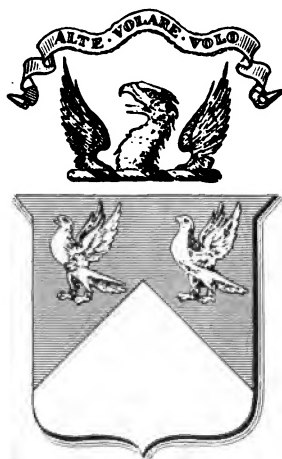
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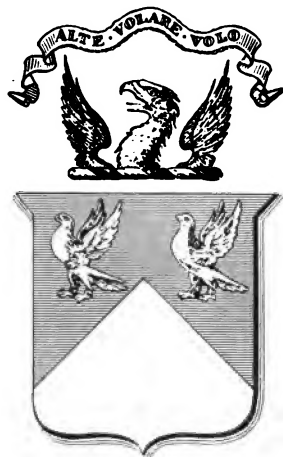
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from

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July 29, 1908

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Grace Feld.

(frontispiece)

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

The

Irresistible Current

By

MRS. I. LOWENBERG



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TO VIND
ABSORBIAO

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HENRY MORSE STEPHENS

The Irresistible Current

CHAPTER I.

Situated in the suburbs of Wiesbaden, Germany, was a little cottage in a small street near the Grand Avenue. It would have been rude looking had it not been for the pink and white roses climbing luxuriantly over it. Decked thus by nature, it contrasted not unpleasingly with the stately palaces bordering the grand and beautiful Wilhelmstrasse. This cottage was the humble home of a young girl of some seventeen summers, whose black eyes, dark complexion and other characteristics proclaimed her to be one of Judea's daughters. She held a letter with an American stamp, which she had just received from the postman.

"See, mother," said the girl, joyfully, to an aged woman who was sitting on a low stool, "I know it is a letter from brother Joseph. Dear Joseph," and she kissed the letter rapturously. "What would we do without him?"

"Come, Ruth, open the letter quickly," said the old lady, who might have been good looking in her young days. "It takes you an age," and she looked wistfully at her son's letter. "Is there nothing written in Hebrew for me?"

"No, mother," she answered as she opened the letter, took from it a small folded paper and glanced hastily over it, "Joseph does better than writing Hebrew letters; he sends us a check again for one hundred thalers!"

"My dear son! my good boy! I am afraid I shall never see him again, never lay my head on his bosom and cry out the joy of my old heart."

"Yes, you can, mother, if you will listen to what he writes":

"Dear Parents:

"Why will you not make up your minds to come to America where labor is King?"—he had caught up the cry of his comrades—"and in this year 19— every one has yet a chance to be rich. Not that *you* shall work; my strong arm can and will do that.

"You, father, shall smoke your pipe, and, mother, you shall knit stockings. Don't be afraid about keeping the good, old orthodox faith, for you can keep it here very well, and you know if you drop a thing or two death won't come from it. It is better here for Ruth, too. She must have her dower at home you know, and there is no need of that here. Her dear, little self is all that will be wanted. As your other children are dead I should think you would want to be united with us, the remaining two.

"To see your dear, loving faces is all that I want to make me completely happy. I send you one hundred thalers; I wish I could make it a thousand. From

"Your loving son,

"JOSEPH RHEINBERG."

"Mother, I think Joseph has a good deal of happiness on the other side of the sea, even if people are not so religious there. I wish we could go to New York."

"I know you are not satisfied here, but your father says that most of the Jews in America do not live up to their religion, that they give up Kosher, go to Synagogue only on the New Year and the day of Atonement and think these few days of prayer enough to give God. Their days and years are spent in dreaming of gold; they think not of the God of Israel, and when they are rich"—here Mrs. Rheinberg heaved a sigh and looked around fearfully as if Satan might creep in if she gave expression to her thoughts—"they forget the Almighty altogether and say boldly, 'there is no God.' It's not right, but your father, though he has no other book learning, has studied Talmud and Midrash and says it is better to be dead and forgotten than think that way."

"Do you think, mother, that Joseph believes as father does?" asked Ruth, opening her eyes wide, knowing how her opinions, though she never gave them utterance, conflicted with her mother's.

"I am afraid not exactly. When your father grows uneasy I comfort him with the hope that our boy is better than other boys, but this letter speaks volumes. I am afraid he is forgetting the lessons of home," and the old lady groaned in the anguish of her heart.

"We had better go to him and keep him from the wrong road," artfully replied Ruth.

"No, no, your father will not hear of it, and,

child, I am afraid I shall soon be moved somewhere else. I feel queer. My head aches, my limbs ache, everything aches."

"Nonsense, mother, don't give way to fancies. You do too much, always saving me; then this letter and the talk about Joseph and America have worked on your feelings. Come now, lie down, take it easy, play lady for the rest of the day."

It is needless to say the mother willingly obeyed the daughter's cheery counsel. The old folks had been born, bred and hoped to die in the old place. They had a perfect horror of "a new country." To them with their years upon them, nothing new could be commendable. Everything which came from their forefathers and had the mold of antiquity about it was wise, beneficial and good. Innovations in religion were devices of Beelzebub. A new mode of traveling dangerous and a change of residence very unlucky.

New departures are not necessarily good, neither can they always be termed unreasonable; for innovators in most instances have based their fundamental changes on judgment and frequently benefited mankind. Moses, Socrates, Mohammed and Luther were innovators and reformers, and the world has had more light through their advent. Aristotle and Bacon, adopting new reasonings in philosophy and evolving new systems, did much for the enlightenment of the world. James Hargreaves, the inventor of the spinning-jenny, who certainly promoted the interests of man, was driven from his home by the other spinners, who thought his new contrivance would deprive them

of work. Innovation means advance. Progress does not necessarily imply Positivism, Evolutionism, Absolutism or other sectional isms. We may, like Auguste Comte, worship humanity and yet believe in God. We may accept one part of a belief and yet reject that which makes the Deity a "Metaphysical hypothesis." Some minds cannot agree with Herbert Spencer and Darwin, neither can they accept the Buddhistical Nirvana nor individual absorption after death, still they may cull some truths, which fall from speculative psychologists.

"Dear father, come in on tiptoe; mother is resting. I went into the room just now and she cried out in her sleep, 'Oh, what lovely white roses!' but don't look frightened, I know it is only a cold. See what I have here for you, a letter and a check," and Ruth held them before Mr. Rheinberg's eyes.

"Ha!" returned the old man, as he walked with an effort to suppress the creaking of his boots, which he thought never before produced such grating sounds, "from Joseph? Let me see; in German. What does he say? Is he going to bless us with joy and come home? I see by your holding your head down that he has not written that. He sends money. Does he think everything can be plastered with thalers?"

"Father, for heaven's sake don't be angry with Joseph. He begs that all of us shall come to him. He can't leave his work and come to see you. He has not enough money for that. Be reasonable; let us go to him."

"Yes," spoke the old man hastily, "go to America and eat pork and oysters. Let Joseph come home, he has enough, and Rachel, our neighbor Isaac's daughter, thinks from his picture that he must be a handsome man. Let me tell you she has a nice, little sum for her dower. He can take her for his wife and that will pay his expenses back, you see. Write him that, Ruth; yes, honey," and his voice softened and he broke out into a gleeful laugh, "you write him that. That is the way to bring my curly headed boy back. Come now and let us go into the other room and see your mother."

"Mother's eyes are closed, father, but her face is very red and very hot; her breath comes thick and fast. What does this mean?"

"It means," replied the old man, feeling his wife's pulse, "that mother is sick. Quick, child, it is not yet dark, run for the doctor."

The evening was a pleasant one in June and the streets were crowded with pleasure seekers of every class. The invalids who came from afar to test the efficacy of the mineral waters, preferred the secluded walks. Ruth flew past them all, past the Kursaal, where the loud voices, the merry shouts of laughter and even the soft strains of the music, which floated from the garden, sounded harshly on her ear. With a few short bounds she was up the steps to the doctor's office. The door opened at her touch.

"Why, Fraulein," said the good, old physician, who had known her from infancy, "what is the trouble?"

"My mother!" cried the panting girl.

"Is ill?" continued the doctor. "Return home, my child, I shall soon follow."

"You will please be quick, Herr Doctor."

"Yes, yes," with a benign, fatherly pat of the hand.

Ruth retraced her steps with the same rapidity that she had come. "Well, well, how is she?" she eagerly inquired of her father.

"She is very sick, I think; talking all the time."

"Did she say anything more of white flowers?"

"No, no, she called Joseph and begged him never to leave her. I don't understand it. So sick; but she has been ailing a long time."

"Oh, father!" said the grief-stricken girl, bursting into a flood of tears, "I dreamt last night of a bride decked with flowers."

"Well, what of that? Have you got your head filled with such silly trash? God is good; she will soon be better."

The doctor soon arrived and Ruth could scarcely wait to hear the result of the diagnosis.

"My child," said good Dr. Müller gravely, "your mother is very ill. No, no, hysterics will not answer," as Ruth lost her self-control. "She requires good and careful nursing, and excitement of any kind will be very injurious to her. Much depends on your skill and judgment, my little woman; so no more tears."

"No, Herr Doctor, I will swallow my tears," replied she with difficulty repressing a sob, "only tell me what to do."

"Yes, yes, now listen; I will give you minute directions and I shall call again in the morning." After instructing her the physician started to go.

"You stay with mother, Ruth, I will see the doctor to the door." No sooner was the door closed than the old man asked in frightened tones, "What is it?"

"It is typhoid fever. I am grieved to say that it appears to be a severe attack, and as she is no longer young, one cannot tell the result. Good-night."

The blunt words of the doctor staggered him and he went in with a heavy heart. "Oh, father, what shall we do?" mutely appealed the eyes of Ruth, and he, interpreting them, said gently, "Watch and wait."

A week passed slowly away and each day the poor woman's fever increased.

"Father, you must take something with your coffee. You have eaten very little since mother has been sick. You will be sick, too, and what will be left me then?"

"You forget your brother Joseph," returned he huskily.

"He cannot be a father, though he has been a good brother."

"True, true. Is your mother alone?"

"What a question, father," answered she, reproachfully, "would I leave her alone? You know some of our people are ever at hand when sickness and trouble come." The father made no reply. "Now, while you eat I shall run to the apothecary and get the medicine. I shall not be gone long. Take your time, the Widow Cohen is a good nurse."

Ruth was absent longer than she calculated,

The prescription took some time to prepare. All perspiring, she ran in. "Father, I stayed very long; I could not help it."

Here two or three women came out. "Ruth, you must not go in yet."

"I will," cried she, seized with a sudden terror, and she pushed them aside and rushed to her mother's bed. "Mother, mother!" she shrieked in absolute agony, as she threw herself over her cold and stiffened form. Mrs. Rheinberg had quietly and unconsciously passed away.

"Come, come, Ruth, you must come away. Your father will break down if you carry on so," and an intimate friend kindly forced her out, saying, "Come, come, child, you know 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' See how quiet your poor father is. Here, sit down, cry, have a good cry, dear, it will do you good."

Though Mr. Rheinberg's grief was "quiet," it was deep and concentrated, and in losing his wife he felt that the ties binding him to life had been snapped asunder.

"Here, Ruth, let me pin this black veil on for you," said her friend Rachel, at the same time kissing her affectionately, as the hearse arrived.

"So soon to bury poor mother," moaned Ruth.

"She has been dead two days, and you forget this hot weather, too. What difference does a day make? The ground must cover her all the same. Bear up, Ruth, for your poor father's sake; he looks miserable, and oh, so pale."

"Poor father, I have been so selfish, thinking only of myself."

"You had better think of him now," adroitly resumed her companion. "Go, take your father's arm; he is waiting for you."

At the cemetery, when the rabbi said, "Dust unto dust," and the old man threw the first clod of earth upon the coffin, he fell back insensible and was taken home in a dying condition; his heart refused to work; the right ventricle had been long affected unknown even to himself. This earthly separation had harrowed his soul, wrung his heart and checked the warm current of life. After lingering a few days his soul passed to the spirit land, to rejoin, let us hope, with the one he loved so well.

"Rachel," groaned Ruth, "I am an orphan, no father, no mother; it is dark, black." It appeared to her that the sun was taken out of the firmament and that the world was clothed in endless night.

"Dark, but not black," returned Rachel, softly; "you have your brother Joseph."

CHAPTER II.

Two months had passed since the death of Ruth's parents. Again the postman brought her a letter to the neighbor's house, where she was temporarily residing. The clouds of grief were already drifting away and would soon leave the horizon of her life's morning, serene and happy again.

"Rachel, here is a check for me and I am going to leave as soon as I can find some one to accompany me. Joseph could not send the money before. Darling brother."

"You talk as if you were glad to go," returned her companion with a frown. "If your brother is so particular about you, why doesn't he come for you himself?"

"I think brother cannot afford it," responded Ruth. "Never mind, I shall soon return and with *him*, too. Our parents' graves are here. It is a holy duty for him to visit them."

Her friend perceiving the wisdom of Ruth's remarks, recovered her good humor and told her of a neighboring family going to America, under whose protection she could travel.

The day before Ruth started for America she and Rachel planted slips of flowers around the graves of Mr. and Mrs. Rheinberg. When

through with her filial task, Ruth commenced to weep bitterly.

"Oh, oh, do stop," broke in Rachel, "do you want to water the flowers with your tears? Don't grieve, I will mind them while you are gone, and when you and Joseph come back they will all be in blossom."

"You are too good," she returned, pressing her hand tenderly. "I shall send the first money I earn to your father to have marble tombstones put over their graves; marble ones, mind, with beautiful golden letters on them. Your father will do it, will he not?"

"Why shouldn't he, if you send the money? You start in the morning?"

"Yes; let me have another look before I leave." Tears streamed from her eyes as she turned from the ground that her feet were never to tread again.

In the morning many good and sympathizing friends accompanied her to the railroad station, but Rachel and her mother did not leave her until they saw her off on the steamer "Algeria" bound for America, the land for which she had so long pined, and whose landscapes, faintly outlined by her brother, were long photographed in her mind.

"Good-bye, dear Rachel, I shall never forget your kindness. You have been like, what I wish you were actually, a sister to me, and your parents like relatives. I shall remember you to Joseph."

"Good-bye; I wish I were going with you," and Rachel kissed Ruth to conceal the vivid blushes her brother's name had called up.

"Come," cried her mother, "you must not stay a minute longer. Come, child, I do believe the steamer is starting," and she grasped her daughter hurriedly by the arm and led her ashore.

"This is nice; this is grand," exclaimed Ruth to Mrs. Gottlieb, her *compagnon de voyage*, who was confined to her berth.

"Oh, yes, very, ugh, ugh. What makes you speak to me, you unfeeling girl? Ugh, ugh."

Ruth drew back in alarm.

"Never mind her now," laughed her husband, "she is feeling a little squeamish. You will not be sick, I think; very good, you can help me with the little ones."

Some persons find nothing monotonous in a sea voyage. The wide expanse of water, bounded by the horizon and canopied by the sky, upon which they look from the tiny speck that bravely skims its surface, seems to them a new testimony of God's creative power. They are ever in sympathy with the ocean whatever may be its mood, awed and fascinated by the exhibition of its power or lulled and stimulated by its repose.

"Mrs. Gottlieb, may I speak to you now?"

"Yes, Ruth; after being at sea seven days with the harbor in sight, one gets used to it; I can stand it now."

"It is almost time," smilingly answered she. "Do you see that quiet young lady with the black dress? I think she must have lost her mother; that old man seems to be her father. That other young girl with her gay dress, dancing up and down, expects, seemingly, to meet her lover."

"Why, what a girl! Did you speak to them?"

"How could I? They don't speak German."

Miss Ruth was possessed of a fanciful mind and had woven pretty little histories about all the passengers.

"Quick girl, that Ruth," observed Mrs. Gottlieb to her husband.

At length the steamer reached port. "I wonder if you'll know your brother?" Mrs. Gottlieb asked.

"I think I shall; I have kissed and scanned his photograph often enough to know."

"The kissing is the very thing to find your brother with, to be sure. Dat ish goot," said Mr. Gottlieb.

"How did you learn so much English?" asked his wife.

"I picked it up on the steamer."

"How clever your husband is," said Ruth to Mrs. Gottlieb.

"Wonderful clever," she answered.

"Sister! Brother!" were the exclamations of Joseph and Ruth at the mutual recognition. Then came thanks and farewells to her kind friends with the parting injunction, "Come to see me soon," answered by "Yes, I shall," and Ruth was placed in a cab by her brother.

"This is grand," exclaimed Ruth. "Have you been lucky since you sent me the check?"

"Yes, reasonably so, but I was luckier before that. I found one day a big lump of gold, but I never wrote to you about it."

"That was wrong. You know how happy our dear parents would have been," and a tear

dropped from her eye. "Mother dreamt in her sickness that you were with her."

"Poor mother and father! I expected, I hoped, I prayed to see them once more before they died, but could not. You see, Ruth, the lump of gold I found was a good American-born girl." His sister gave a violent start. "I wanted to go home before I married, knowing full well that after that I could not, but a brother, her only support, died, and what could I do to quiet her grief but to marry her? I prayed God that the dear ones might not die until I could see them, but he willed otherwise. I had not the courage to write home that I was married, feeling what a blow it would be for them. But here we are at home."

"Poor Rachel!" murmured Ruth. She stepped out of the cab into a small, but respectable-looking street and was conducted by her brother into a cleanly tenement house, where they were met by a comely little woman, whom Joseph greeted with a rapturous kiss, saying:

"Clara, my dear, here is my sister Ruth," and after a transient glance at each other, they fell to kissing as women do, flinging to the winds the sweetest nothings with the greatest prodigality.

"Come," said Joseph, playfully, "don't waste your kisses on each other. Look round, Ruth, and see how neat, though plain, everything is; this will tell you what a first-class housekeeper is your sister-in-law."

"Don't praise me so loudly, my dear," modestly returned his wife. "Come, Ruth, into your room; have a good wash and something to eat."

When she had so refreshed herself and come

out, her brother said: "Now, sister, and you, too, Clara, sit down. Tell me, Ruth, all about our parents, how they lived and how they died and where they are buried. I wish I could have seen them."

"Are you sorry you married me? Have I been in your way?"

"You, a wife, stand in a husband's way. Oh, Clara!"

She hung her head, took his hand and interrupted them no more.

The death-bed scenes of the parents were minutely given, and many other subjects of minor importance proved to brother and sister interesting themes of conversation.

And Ruth was at last in the great metropolis of the western continent, yea, in the Canaan flowing with milk and honey. How tenaciously we cling—often even the wisest of us—to the mere fancies of the brain! Happy they who flee early from phantoms and, like nature herself, nestle in realities which, if not always agreeable, will always respond to our senses and never desert us!

"Brother, you must find me some work, I can make buttonholes nicely."

"By machine? If so, a dollar a day." And to Ruth, just from Europe, the remuneration seemed munificent.

"I tell you, Ruth"—this was some few days after the conversation about work—"you can do better than going out by the day, and it is nicer, too. Work at home; I can bring you plenty and

you can buy a machine on the installment plan," to which Ruth gladly assented.

The next day found Ruth happy at work; the sun commenced to shine very brightly for her in the new world.

Time sped on and in due course introduced a little girl to the household, who was called Letitia, at the request of the mother. She did not know its meaning, but had read a book in which "Letitia" was the heroine, and as she thought it sounded well, too, bestowed it with the father's approval upon her little daughter.

The little girl as she grew showed herself a loving little thing, making at times music as pleasing as the rippling of a brook. She was soon queen of the household and ruled her loving subjects quite despotically.

Ruth's first earnings were carefully hoarded, for she had an object in view. With her brother's assistance, when the first yearly light was lighted for those who lay sleeping in the cemetery at Wiesbaden there was erected over their graves a marble column and an epitaph written in Hebrew attesting the virtues and loving disposition of the deceased. After this act of love and devotion the mourning gown was laid aside.

"Jerusalem! how pretty and sweet you look in bright colors. I think I must hunt up some of my male acquaintances to see your good looks before they fade away," and Joseph eyed his sister critically.

"Oh, Joseph, how can you talk so? I am happy here."

"Why, what do you mean? Do you want to be an old maid? I hate the sight of them. They are actually horrid."

"Why, what are you saying? There is Mrs. Bliss, our nice Christian neighbor, who has an unmarried sister some forty years old, and I am sure she is sweet and good. When she has time she teaches poor children and is always doing some kind of charity. I have often heard you say yourself that she is one of the best of women."

"Well, so she is, but that doesn't alter my wishes about you; besides, would it not be better for her to have her own home to take care of than caring for other people's children? Take my advice, get married; and listen, Ruth, don't wait until you are old."

"I am not old yet, and I am in no hurry," said she, pouting her red lips.

"No, no, but time slips away and we grow old before we know it."

One of the characteristics of the Jewish race is, that if possible, there shall be no old maids in a family. This tendency, on the other hand, is counterbalanced by the most exquisite tenderness toward those they are so anxious to put under another's protection. These anomalies in human nature are inexplicable and mysterious.

As Ruth was one day laughingly kissing her brother, he said: "I think I have found some one whom you will love better than you do me. What do you say to that?"

"I think that impossible," answered Ruth, blushing like a peony.

"Well, my dear, I hope you will try, and I think when you have seen *him* it will not be such very hard work. Really, my friend, Henry Feld, is a very nice young man and he is as handsome—let me think how handsome—as that marble picture we saw in the gallery the other day. I forget the name, but what's the difference, he is good looking."

"Stop now, or I shall really try to make myself look pretty," and, woman-like, Ruth threw an admiring glance on the figure which the opposite mirror reflected.

"Yes," said Clara smiling, "to make ourselves pleasing is one of the sweetest aims of women. Don't you think so, Joseph?" As she concluded the sentence one arm twined itself lovingly around his neck and the dark eyes looked affectionately into his. Kissing her tenderly, he could not help thinking how his friend would thank him for making him a Benedict, too, and leading him into such a haven of bliss.

"Ruth, the handsome man is in the front room and will spend the evening with you if you make yourself agreeable."

"What, already?"

"It has been a week or more since we talked of him. You look well to-night, come."

"Where is Clara? Let her go in first."

"Clara is minding the baby, come. Come." There was nothing for Ruth but to comply.

As Mr. Rheinberg introduced his sister, she looked down demure and abashed and it was some time before she could look the "handsome man" in the face, but Henry Feld, on the contrary, gazed at her boldly, and as his eyes ran over the pretty, intelligent face and neat figure, he could not help giving vent to some adroit expression of admiration, which Ruth scarcely knew how to answer.

"Not so fast, friend Henry, my sister knows little of the world and of men in particular, with their flattery and nonsense." Joseph spoke somewhat chidingly, though he inwardly chuckled at the success of his plans.

"Why, Joseph, your sister is splendid, so modest, so good-looking and speaks such good English for so short a time. I wager she is an industrious little body, making good use of her spare time, reading and doing just what she should do."

"Yes, indeed," returned Joseph, "Ruth is a trump. There is only one other woman as good as she is and that is my wife. The man who gets my sister is a lucky one."

"Let me be that lucky fellow."

Ruth, who had listened to this conversation with flushed cheeks and quivering lips, now stepped up to her brother and said, "For shame, Joseph, praising me so."

"I only spoke the truth; but, Henry, you ask too quickly. I must have time to think over it and talk with my sister."

Henry endeavored to follow up his advantage

and have the proposition considered and answered on the spot, but Ruth persisted in saying:

"No, I must and will have time to think it over."

"Well, I will give you a week," sullenly assented Henry. "Your brother has known me ever since he has been in New York, and nothing but good, and that is something, you know. Well, I will get over my bad humor and come to see you often before the week is out and at the end of it have an answer. And let it be, 'yes,' don't drive me to take poison," and he ended with a laugh.

After Joseph considered the pros and cons, he told his sister that she should accept and Ruth, though she thought him a "little quick" in his temper, was willing to be guided.

And Joseph continued, "Don't be afraid; he is rash, but good-natured, and if you only learn how to take him, he will make a first-rate husband. With him it was love at first sight."

"But, Joseph, the engagement must be longer than the courtship."

"I will give you six weeks. Will that be long enough for courtship and preparation?"

"Perhaps, as I have brought with me piles of linen articles made up by poor mother. She always said, 'I am making up things from time to time, so when you go to make some man happy, you will not come like a beggar.' Poor mother," and a tear started to her eye.

"How happy," resumed Joseph, tenderly, "our parents would be if here now; but that cannot be. Maybe they know in heaven what we are doing here; for if there is a heaven, those old,

pious souls, knowing no wrong, must be there. So, dry your tears and think of your lover."

Henry Feld, true to his appointment came and demanded his answer, which was a low, almost inaudible, assent. Before the six weeks had expired Ruth was as passionately in love as if she were going to marry in opposition to the wishes of her brother and the whole world. Her heart overflowed with happiness. Love had transformed for her everything with his magic wand. Earth seemed to partake of her gladness and all nature echoed her song of joy.

"Oh, Joseph!" exclaimed Ruth, "the days seem to fly; I try to hold them, but they will not stay."

And who under such circumstances does not realize the truth of the poet:

"Never does Time travel faster,
Than when his way lies among flowers."

"Dear sister, why think of the past or the future? Take the present and make the best of it as I do," and he kissed her repeatedly.

"Clara, how do I look in my white muslin with these pretty orange blossoms in my hair? Dear Henry has given me so many things!" and, Ruth—for it was her wedding day—turned 'round and 'round for the inspection of her sister-in-law.

"You look so well that I can hardly believe it is you. I am sure I must look horrid in this old dress made over; but you know the little one costs, and I prefer that she should be well dressed. But see how good Joseph is; he brought

me this last night with which to deck myself," and she took out of a paper box stuffed with pink cotton, a heavy gold chain.

"Lovely!" cried Ruth; "it is as thick as the one Henry gave me. The girls tell me I mustn't wear mine till the marriage is over, but then I will put on all I have and make them stare. I wish it was over, though, I feel a little nervous."

"It won't be long; kiss me, and here comes little Letitia for a kiss."

The smiling brother gave the happy, but trembling, bride away, and when the marriage vows bound her to Henry Feld, angels appeared to sing in her ear, and heavenly visions of happiness floated around her.

CHAPTER III.

Civilization had reached the mighty West of the New Continent and had built the town of D—, in Missouri, on the grand Mississippi. Progress had been born there, but struggled feebly for existence. The child was not yet strong enough to strangle the serpent Prejudice, which flourished on the soil and raised its hardy head with pride and insolence.

"Letitia, to-day eighteen years ago we left New York for this town of D—. You are nineteen years and six months old now; then you were a little toddling girl and the only one," said Mrs. Rheinberg.

"It's a pity I did not remain so," said the young girl, crossly.

"How you talk. Don't let your father hear that. I have seven children now and heaven knows what destiny is in store for them."

"Roses, of course!" said Letitia, contemptuously. "Don't trouble yourself to think, mother, you are growing too stout."

"Then the more I think the better. It will take down some of the fat. I am not so stout as Mrs. Silverbaum; why, her daughter Rebecca's waist is nearly as large as mine."

"That is certainly a matter of congratulation. Mrs. Silverbaum! that hateful, vulgar, old

woman! I don't blame her husband for dying and leaving her to shift for herself; though through his life insurance she can live better now than before. That Rebecca is now prouder than ever. She thinks she is wisdom personified, always correcting her mother. She must be twenty-five, I fancy."

"No, she is not more than twenty-two—her mother told me so. Take care, Letitia, that you don't follow her and forget what you owe your mother."

"Forgive me, mother. Have I been cross? But then I cannot help getting vexed even when I make the best resolutions. Think how things work against us. There is Aunt Ruth, who has only one child. Not alone is my cousin, Grace Feld, the only child, but her father is fairly rich and mine is poor. Why did not father invest in lands, too; he has to struggle along in business and so many mouths to feed? I, who love refinement, comfort and luxury, must content myself with little or nothing, while that pale Grace, with her fair complexion, blue eyes and golden hair, has everything thrust upon her. She is the idol of her parents, and were it not that she is a Jewess would be the idol of her companions. What is there in that doll face?" Letitia in her passion wept.

"For heaven's sake, child, don't cry. Doesn't your father do his best for you? Have you not been going to the convent school as long as Grace? Will you not, please God, graduate next year as well as she? Have I not denied my-

self, and even your little sisters and brothers, many things to give you what you like?"

"Yes, yes, that is all true; that is what makes things so bitter for me."

"But your father and I do it willingly. You are our heart's delight; you are a star in beauty and you are certainly as smart as Grace. In your father you are blessed, at all events"—hesitatingly—"for your uncle drinks."

"Oh, yes, mother, I am smarter than Grace is. And I am beautiful, my mirror tells the tale. My hair is as black as the raven's wing, my complexion dark and clear as a running stream, my lips as red as cherries, my figure straight as an arrow and well developed; Grace sinks into insignificance beside me. Mother, I say my beauty *must* bring me for what I long. But who is there here? That merchant, Berkhoff? He is too vulgar; he has no taste. The field is small," and she hung her head in thought.

"Child, I never knew your heart before. Already thinking of marriage while at school. Come, put away such thoughts, darling, they pain me," and her mother clasped her affectionately in her arms.

"Didn't I tell you not to think you are too stout; now, you old pet, I tell you not to think lest you may get too thin," and she gave her mother two or three hearty embraces. "I am going to the window now to prepare my lessons and see who passes. Why, there is Grace! It is well that she must always pass my window to go to town unless she takes a roundabout way. I wonder where she has been? So late, too!"

Grace Feld walked on at a hurried gait two blocks further on and ran up the steps of her elegant home, which was surrounded by extensive and beautifully laid out grounds.

"Mother, mother, where are you? Were you frightened that I stayed so long?" and Grace, who entered her mother's sitting-room, threw her arms around her neck and kissed her.

"Yes, I was," returned Mrs. Feld, a little more mature than when we saw her on her wedding day. "What kept you so long and why didn't you take Letitia with you? You know your father doesn't like it when you go out alone."

"Do you know, mother, I walked along in thought until I passed the house. So I went into Berkhoff's for the book—I wish papa kept books—he has such a nice collection, you know. He waited on me himself. He was so long about it—I found half of them myself—I was afraid it would be night. He offered to take me home, but I declined. I knew you would not like it, but Rebecca Silverbaum in silks and feathers was just passing and stopped to talk with him. She talked and laughed so loudly that I just gave them a little nod and ran on."

"Quite right, darling. Rebecca is a little stuck up, though, of course, not with us, and her mother is dreadful. Grace, I was poor, very poor, at home, with learning barely enough to read and write, but how different my poor, old mother was from Mrs. Silverbaum and how differently I was brought up from Rebecca."

"I am sure of it; I am sure of it, mother."

"Berkhoff is good and charitable. I am afraid Rebecca will pull him into her net."

"He is very vain, I think, and forgets his grammar occasionally; so Rebecca may be just the girl for him."

"Well, we will not make any matches yet," laughed Mrs. Feld, "so ring the bell and let Pete light the lights."

Grace did as she was bidden. The servant entered, flooded the room with light and left them together. "Why, mamma, how pale you look. Are you fatigued?"

"Yes, a little. Take up your books, child, and learn your lessons."

The darkness grew thicker and deeper outside, the stars shone brighter and brighter, and Grace continued studying, with every now and then a furtive glance at her mother, whose sad face reflected the painful meditation of her heart; finally she gave her books a toss and said, "I am tired of studying, mamma. I shall leave my astronomical problems unsolved until after dinner; I shall come from celestial to terrestrial things. I wonder papa doesn't come in for dinner. I am going to the door to see."

"No, child, don't go. You cannot see in the dark."

"My eyes are like an owl's. I can peer through the darkness and perhaps see papa. I suppose business detains him. Why, you are crying!" Her mother's tears made Grace pale visibly. "He came home later yesterday and was not—cross, I mean."

"Oh, Grace," replied her mother, though she

did not notice her confusion about the word "cross," which she substituted for intoxicated. "When your father touched the wine cup to make trade better, it was an unhappy hour for me."

"Have patience, mother," and Grace caressed her affectionately. "Hark! I hear his footsteps approaching. Dry your tears, do not let him see that you have been crying, for you know it irritates him. Run and embrace him, dear mother, it will soothe him."

"Indeed, I cannot, my limbs tremble so I cannot walk. Hear, he is scolding the servants and must be in a worse condition than usual."

Grace trembled. That the servants should know, gossip and sneer about the infirmity of her dear father, was maddening. Alone she could endure it, but for the world to be a spectator, her courage forsook her and she stood as if petrified.

"A warm welcome, indeed, after the wear and tear of the day's business," said Mr. Feld as he came in and glared savagely at his wife and child. "Both as cold as marble, too! I think I had better be moving into a more congenial place. You, Miss Grace, have too much book learning to be polite to your father. Madam, you had better put a little more love into your daughter's heart."

Grace endeavored to repress her sobs and make her peace with him, knowing she alone could avert the storm from breaking with unrestrained fury on the head of her devoted mother.

"Papa, dear," she said, as she threw her arms around him in a fervent embrace, though he was reeking with the fumes of liquor, "dear mamma

always teaches me to love, obey and pray for you. As to education, who so proud and happy as you, to see my mind expanded and enriched by culture! You think how wise I am. And when you look at my sketch-book you say I have genius, that I shall astonish every one yet. Now, will you reproach mamma for making me all that pleases you?" The sad, plaintive voice and trembling form of this frail mimosa appealed to his heart.

"Well, well, only stop those everlasting tears, which you women bring up at a moment's notice," as the tears glistened in the eyes of Grace, and he staggered to the marble table where lay her books. "What do you call this?" and his attempted smile ended in a leer.

"This is a work on astronomy."

"What does it tell you?"

"It tells of the sun, moon and stars and their movements."

"You buy your books of Berkhoff! Damn him, damn him, I say! Do you see his name?" said he, excitedly.

"I always buy my books there, father, can't always get them elsewhere," replied Grace, much shocked at her father's words.

"He has injured me, Grace, he takes my customers from me by selling cheaper. He is a puppy, he is. Think I will get poor through him? Don't forget it, and let's to dinner. I am thirsty," he said in a whining voice.

"Grace," said her mother sotto voce, "do your best to coax him to his room. Make him lie down. I am disgusted and heartbroken."

"What yer saying? I want drink" (hic, hic).

"Yes, yes, come with Grace, father; I shall give you something to drink." So with tears and entreaties she brought him to his room, where he threw himself heavily on the bed. Grace brought coffee and gently compelled him to drink some, then she retired to her own apartment. She had no heart to go and console her mother. She threw herself on her knees in her misery, exclaiming, "Merciful Father, is it possible that I can and must endure such scenes? I so young, my life to be blighted by this vice! My father to be pointed at with the finger of scorn! His blue eyes dim and watery, his noble form bent and tottering with such an execrable habit, I to be called the drunkard's daughter, my mother the drunkard's wife, my mother's heart crushed, my pride and elasticity gone—this is gall and wormwood."

The musical murmurs of the winds stealing through the shrubbery made a soothing lullaby to her wounded spirit. When abed she said her prayers and, feeling exhausted, soon sank into a deep slumber.

"There goes pretty Grace Feld to school," said young Mr. Bennett (who was paying teller in the Missouri Bank) to Mr. Hill. The latter was a fine, portly gentleman of advanced years with silvery hair, the embodiment of gentility and refinement.

"Yes, it is she. Alice, who is so recklessly good-natured, has spoken to her once or twice. Amelia gives her a wide circuit."

"I have not been here long you know. It was Miss Alice who called my attention to her thus, 'That fragile flower is Miss Feld, that red rose, her cousin—looks as if she were full of thorns.' Miss Alice is very ingenious; I am striving for her good graces, with your permission."

"No objection. Your letters of recommendation from friends of mine open my doors to you. Still there is time enough. 'Hasten slowly,' my boy."

"Your advice does not agree with my sentiments," said the young man, "but I shall be advised, sir. There comes Mr. Feld. He was in a deplorable state yesterday, staggering around town; I should think he would respect himself more."

"I know nothing of him, except through the gossip of a small town like this."

"I must tell you what I heard when I first came here, it is too good; it may lose flavor by keeping."

"Well, well, you render me impatient."

"A gentleman, an old resident, said to me, 'Mrs. Feld is a very charitable woman, she is, but'—— Pray don't stop there, I cried. Has she committed some fearful crime that has photographed itself on her face? If so then arrest her and put her in some deep dungeon and there let her pass her vile life away!' He resumed, 'She has been born with it. It is derived from her ancestors. She does not practice it, but is there all the same. It is her religion. She is of that proscribed race whom nothing but conversion can make good.'"

"I have never come in contact with them. There are only a few Jews here, and I avoid them very easily. As a lawyer I have never been called upon by them and I am heartily glad of it. I think that socially they are for the most part best off by themselves," observed the old gentleman stiffly.

"Would you confine them to Ghettos and precincts as of old and as is still done in Russia?"

"Heaven forbid. As I am an American-born citizen with freedom glowing in my veins, I should restrict no one on account of his religious opinions. Still, I prefer not to mingle with them. In maintaining my individual rights I must respect those of others, but my dislike to this race is beyond my will. If green peace *are* a vegetable I cannot digest, I do not eat them, but I do not prohibit others from doing so. Why, bless my heart! who is this sailing down on us with all her sails spread and arrayed in all the colors of the rainbow?"

"Miss Alice," naively said Charles Bennett, "told me she is a Miss Silverbaum. Her necklace is as thick as a rope. That must be worth something. She is gorgeous. It is fortunate Miss Hill is not here to see her."

"Ah! Amelia is a little severe, but it is necessary sometimes. I must hurry up to my office now. Good-day, Mr. Bennett."

"Good-day, Mr. Hill. Please call me Charlie hereafter."

"Not yet, you sly dog."

CHAPTER IV.

The Hill mansion was situated on a pleasant, wide street surrounded by poplars. It was of red brick, two stories high, with a good depth, and in front was a pretty little garden, with wild roses rioting over the fence; in the rear a very small orchard and vegetable garden. In summer the strawberries kissed the ground, in winter the snow blotted out fruit, roses and leaves and left nothing but memories.

"I see papa coming in the distance," said Alice Hill, clapping her hands.

"And who is with him?" returned her sister Amelia, while a slight smile played around her lips.

"It's—Charlie, I declare," replied Alice, while her cheeks flushed with pleasure. "What a nice time we shall have; he will stay to dinner and then spend the evening."

"Oh, fie, Alice," resumed Amelia, "your merry blue eyes tell tales. But here they are," and she greeted her father with a soft kiss and the visitor with an easy, but dignified courtesy.

"Here, papa, don't let me be overshadowed by Amelia. Let me give you my kiss of welcome. How do you do, Charl—Mr. Bennett, I mean."

"Why, Miss Hoyden, how now?" questioned her father.

"Never mind, Mr. Hill, Miss Alice and I understand each other. Don't we?" said Bennett gayly, at the same time shaking hands.

After dinner had been partaken of Mr. Hill said quietly but quizzically to Amelia, "There is an addition to the town. Can you imagine in what shape?"

"I am not at all happy in guessing, father."

"I see by the sparkle in your eye, Alice, you want to ask a question. Go on," said her father.

"Is it an architect to build a new home or is it a sea-monster? Come, papa, I give it up," and she nodded to Bennett. He laughed heartily as if he divined what was coming.

"It is," resumed Mr. Hill slowly, "a Jewish lawyer." No one spoke for a moment. The revelation stupefied the young ladies, while Bennett seemed rather amused at the grave situation.

"He must be an ogre," returned Alice, resuming her gayety before the shadow of thought passed from Amelia's brow.

"Girls, twenty-three years ago, when I married your dear, deceased mother, there was not a Jew in this town and now there will soon be a community of them. They force themselves everywhere and into everything," and Mr. Hill drank some ice water to restore his equilibrium.

"Mr. Bennett, you came from a large city, have you ever come across a Jewish lawyer?" asked Amelia.

"In St. Louis, where I hail from, there are shoals of them, personally I know nothing about them."

"It is all very well for them to be lawyers in

large cities where their people congregate, but to intrude even into the towns, practice with us members of the bar, disseminating some of their antique opinions, I say it is abominable," continued Mr. Hill.

"Have you seen this man and what is his name?" questioned Amelia of Bennett.

"I have not seen *him*, but his shingle is flung to the breeze with the inscription, 'Mark Anthony Everard, Attorney-at-Law,' in large black letters."

"It is a wonder they are not in gilt," replied Amelia. "Father, you will most probably see him to-morrow and can then tell us what he looks like."

"Let me describe him to you," broke in Alice. "Short of stature, black, hungry looking eyes, receding forehead, a nose like the beak of an eagle, thick lips, stop—I must not forget to crown his head with short, thick, black, curly hair. Now, if Gustave Doré were living and would only make an illustration of that, Amelia, how pretty it would be for your album," said she with a laugh.

"Alice," said her father reprovingly, "you go too far. I never could abide caricature. I dislike the Jewish race, their intrusion, in fact, everything about them, but your dear mother would not have approved of your laughter at the expense of another. She was too religious and too good for that."

Alice, abashed and with tears in her eyes, hung her head and faltered out, "Forgive me, papa, it's wicked, I know."

"Mark Anthony Everard, a pretty name, don't

you think so, Miss Hill?" inquired Bennett, anxious to cover the confusion of Alice.

"It sounds harsh and heathenish to me," replied Amelia.

"I warrant you he prides himself that he is named after that licentious—that illustrious Roman, Mark Anthony, Ha, Ha," laughed Mr. Hill. "Come, girls, let us have some music and singing. Bennett here, with his fine tenor voice, can admirably accompany you. Let us enjoy our evening."

"Amelia," exclaimed Alice the next day, running up to her sister as she closed the door after her, "I have seen the phenomenon. What a pity you were not with me!"

"What phenomenon? Pray don't speak in riddles."

"The Jewish lawyer, to be sure. What other phenomenon can or will this town ever boast of?" replied Alice, laughing and then pouting her pretty lips.

"Indeed! I am sure I did not lose much by remaining at home."

"But you did. Let me describe him accurately this time. He has a tall, commanding figure, blue eyes—mind, not black—a pleasant mouth, fair complexion and light hair, and no little curls. I am afraid, Amelia, Gustave Doré, if living, could not do him justice!"

"I am astonished at you, Alice. You must have stared at him."

"Oh, Amelia, you know I may be thoughtless, but I am never rude. I went into Berkhoff's store to get some more of that blue material to put an-

other ruffle on my dress, when whom should I see but Mr. Berkhoff, Charlie and another gentleman standing together talking business, politics, I don't know what. Of course, I must talk a word with Charlie or his appetite would be spoiled for dinner. We felt we were near each other right away, magnetic attraction, you know, and what could he do but chivalrously say, 'Miss Alice Hill, will you allow me to introduce you to Mr. Everard?'

"I should think he would have had sufficient politeness to go and not have intruded."

"But you forget, sister, I was the cause, the innocent, little cause, that interrupted them. Mr. Everard acknowledged the introduction with the bow of a courtier—yes, a courtier, who must know how to bow well, I think—and spoke a few words in clear, pure English; not the slightest accent. Your exact ideal of a man, Amelia, but, of course, if all his opinions, which are no doubt coarse, were written on his face he would look hideous."

"Alice, how dare you! how can you so offend me as to say that my ideal of a man is found in one of Jewish birth? I do not hate that race, I simply despise it," and she spoke with a passion that was foreign to her nature.

"Oh, sister!" exclaimed Alice, frightened at Amelia's face, "don't misunderstand me. You know when you refused Mr. Lawrence, of Boston, I reproached you, or rather thought you should have taken him; you told me I did not understand for what your soul craved. You sketched a man with just such an exterior, but as

for mind and soul you depicted something so grand, so noble, I fear he must be a demigod to realize that. But then you are older, twenty, you know, better and wiser than I am. I often tell papa I think you are perfection; then he says, 'Look at her and you can picture your dear, dead mother.' There is no one good enough for you."

Amelia was human and her spirit was softened at her sister's heartfelt incense. She archly said, "Don't let Charlie hear you give such glowing descriptions of Mr. Everard."

"Oh, Charlie is the best fellow in the world. Suits me exactly. He is dark and I am blonde; I am of medium height, he a little taller; I nearly eighteen—lacking three months—he twenty-six. We are both gay and happy and I know we shall both love each other more every day. Charlie says when I am eighteen he is going boldly to ask papa for my hand; my heart he has already. Do you remember two weeks ago, when you ~~learned~~ I was ill I was so quiet, and to soothe your loving apprehensions I told you it was supreme happiness that caused it; Charlie had told me that day that he loved me more than anything on earth."

"Indeed, darling, I remember. I have had considerable talk with papa about him; he says, 'I shall wait and see. Charlie is a clever fellow. His father was a companion of mine in my young days.' So, I think, when he asks father will not say him nay."

Alice, with joy in her heart, took Amelia in her arms and embraced her.

CHAPTER V.

"Oh, mother, mother," said Grace, coming home from the convent school, "my heart has received a deep wound to-day. Shall I ever forget it? I wish we were out of this detestable place or that God had made us Christians." Burning tears ran down her cheeks and she threw herself despondingly into a chair.

"Tut, tut, my dear child! Have they again been taunting you with the name of 'Jew'? And is not my dear daughter's soul strong enough to bear the injustice in silence or to answer with becoming dignity? Ah! it is not your Cousin Letitia, who for the gibes of thoughtless children would wish that she were born of another faith. Are you ready to deny your God for hearing the truth, and a truth of which you should be proud?"

"I know I should," and Grace looked confused, "but, dear mother, you cannot imagine how sorely I have been tried. I told you yesterday of the sorority organized by the girls of our class. Naturally, Letitia and I sent in our names. I had no doubt that we would be admitted without hesitation, as we stand well in class and our deportment is good. But before taking our names they told us that the rule of the sorority was that each one should wear a cross. Well, I had gone too far to recede; Letitia made some

objection, but as it was the rule, I thought it would seem bigoted not to comply, and induced her to do likewise. Judge of our surprise and mortification when we were rejected. Being near a knot of girls, one said, right within our hearing, too, 'The impudence of those two girls wanting to be admitted into our order which, though simply one of companionship and pleasure, is still, by the cross, emblematical of our holy religion. We will not admit such as they.' You should have seen and heard Letitia, her body erect, her head thrown proudly back, her eyes flashing fire, her cheeks burning, her words seemed to scorch her hearers, who retreated as though from a fire. I could say nothing. The blinding tears scalded my cheeks, my heart palpitated fearfully and I almost wished to die. And then there was the new girl, Josie Guidry, from Louisiana, whom I so much admire, standing near them." Grace broke down at the recollection and cried bitterly.

"Come, child," and her mother smoothed her hair lovingly, "I do not like your tears or Letitia's rough way. She must have looked like that fabled—what do you call it that you read to me about?"

"Pythoness," replied Grace, smiling through her tears.

"Yes, that is it. Religion should use no violence in words or deeds and should gain what it can by persuasion and reason. By being quiet under indignities we show that our religious teachings are better."

Grace smiled again. Mrs. Feld inquired the cause and she answered: "You know my sweet,

gentle friend, Lizzie Raynor, that angel of goodness, who is ever near me when I need her, told me that she would resign her presidency of the sorority if we were not admitted, but I entreated her not to do so, as neither Letitia nor I would ever enter unless with the good-will of all the members. She told me not to mind such rude, ill-bred girls, that her religion taught sisterly and brotherly love, that I must endure silently and that her holy faith had a glorious example in her Lord, who died to save and who held out his arms to repentant sinners. That it was his wish for all to go unpunished, as he said, 'Forgive them, they know not what they do.' Though I did not want to hear of her Saviour, the kind words, after so much rudeness, fell like balm on my lacerated feelings. Mother, dear mother, I was fearfully taxed to-day and my weak, but proud soul was tested, and it bent and swayed like a reed before the wind."

"Come to my arms, you wounded dove, and let us pray God that these Christians"—a little of the blood of the Pharisees still flowed in her veins—"may have a little more love for everybody put into their hearts; that your spirit may be strong and let come what will that your faith may never grow weak. May the God of your fathers, who saved them from the Egyptians, lift up your sinking spirit and keep you from harm and danger."

Grace, with hands folded around her mother, prayed fervently, but it was not to the God who smote Ammonite or Hittite, but to the universal God, the Father of all, and she truthfully felt as

she said, "Yes, mother, now I feel prepared to battle to the *death* for my religion."

The mother kissed her again and again before she released her. The cruel words spoken to her child rankled in her breast.

"Here comes Letitia," and Grace ran to meet her cousin, who came in with the spring of a gazelle.

"Hey-day! You have been crying again. I declare I have never seen any one like you, you will exhaust your fountain of tears. I know you have been talking about our rebuff at school. You should do as I do; no fastidious, scrupulous considerations with me. I fire away with direct aim, making every shot tell, and they flee from me as from explosive bullets. I shall bring out my mitrailleuse next time and not give them even the opportunity to retreat," added Letitia, with an exultant laugh.

"Ah! but I cannot; I try to follow the Golden Rule, 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.'"

"'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth,' says the Holy Book. My heart swells with indignation and anger when I am held accountable for what my ancestors did, through Pontius Pilate, more than eighteen hundred years ago. Is there any other nation under the sun which is held up to ridicule and scorn because some of their member centuries back carried out the Roman mode of execution on a heretic? It seems to me if suffering is to purify us we have been purified."

"We must not forget, dear Letitia, that all are not unjust. There must be many like dear, good

Lizzie Raynor. She is ever at hand to soothe ruffled tempers and restore harmony where there is discord. With her fair hair and complexion, combined with her dreamy, violet eyes, she seems more an ethereal being than one of this mundane sphere. She has so much to endure, too, from her step-mother, who is harsh and unkind to her. I do not see how any one can be so to such a gentle creature. It appears that her very gentleness provokes her step-mother's anger. She returns good for evil, 'for Christ's sake,' she says."

"The proverb, 'If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink,' is as good as anything that can be said," returned Letitia, determined not to be outdone. "As for Lizzie Raynor, she is good, too good for this wicked world," with a mischievous glance at Grace. "Though we have never had a harsh word together, we do not harmonize as you do. There is no affinity between us, and our thoughts and feelings are as diametrically opposed to each other as the antipodes. Bah! let us think of something else. I am so glad that the examination will be soon and that we are to graduate, then for the salutatory, valedictory, diplomas, etc. Oh, then away with musty books. I need not care which inhabitants of the earth are called Amphiscii, Heteroscii, Periscii, Antoecei or Perioeci; I am heartily tired of pouring over books; I am tired of Sister Lucy as a painting teacher and of this poverty which will make itself felt in spite of all my endeavors to the contrary. It ties me to this miserable little town—city it wants to be called—and leaves me nothing to do

but to look at the stupid people, who are like creeping snails. Oh, I long for parties, music, flowers! I love the poetry of life, not its slow, rhythmical melodies, but the dithyrambic hymns of triumphal cars. One long draught of the sweets of life's cup, then the car of Juggernaut may pass over me."

"Girl, did you learn that in the convent?"

"Aunt, I need no lessons in such things. You forget that I am nineteen years and six months old. I am a year older than you, Grace."

"I am horrified at you, Letitia. Those thoughts are too passionate for a school-girl's heart. I look forward quietly and back with regret at the many happy years I have passed within those sylvan shades. I wonder in fear what the future will unfold for me. I trust quiet happiness and a honeysuckle cottage." Such were the aspirations of gentle Grace.

"Very romantic, my dear, had not bountiful Providence placed so much within your reach." The words came out of the school-girl's mouth edged with bitterness. "Why, Grace, I have been robbed of two years by sickness when I could and should have been at school."

As straws show which way the wind blows, so do words, though spoken under the disguise of false friendship, reveal the innate envy of the heart. Plutarch justly remarks, "Envy is always unjust."

"I am so glad we don't board at the convent. I only wish we did not always take this way, but

go through the town proper. Do you know who called last night?"

"How should I know?"

"Mark Anthony Everard. What a delightful man! but poor; has his way to make in life. I hate climbing, I like to be up at the top at once."

"Who asked you to climb, Letitia? Not Mr. Everard, did he?"

"Of course not. Will he ask me the first night he calls to see me? I am only revolving in my mind if he is worth the struggle. Grace, you have seen him; he is perfect and rest assured he will not be conquered without work."

"He is a splendid young man. I am sure I don't know what he will want in return."

"You don't need to know, but here we are, with the old white-washed fence—wall I like to call it—staring us in the face. Slam, bang, we are in," added Letitia, giving the door a vigorous pull after her.

The convent or house where the nuns resided was a large, frame building with a wing to one side. The school-house was of brick and more pretentious in appearance; it had also a wing. The main buildings nearly approached one another; large grounds separated the two wings, which extended far back and formed the girls' playground. Two beautiful arbors, one covered with the hop and the other with the grape vine, made pleasant walks in summer. In the front was a large garden with many rare exotics and to the side an extensive vegetable garden.

"Good-morning, girls." Letitia gave her books a toss over her head.

"Letitia, two new arrivals. What do you say to that?"

"Well, who are they, Mary Crane?"

"One is a delicate-looking child nine or ten years old and the other is only a charity child," snapped in Jennie Fox.

"Oh, never you mind, Jennie; there they come. Susie Forge looks like a saint; that Ann Miller, the charity girl, looks like a wild one; the mischief lurks in her eye," said Mary Crane.

"What a sweet-looking, little thing Susie Forge is. How sad she looks."

"She is in mourning; has she no mother?" asked Grace.

"No, but I must run; the bells are ringing for prayers."

The girls now poured into the large school-room, where they always assembled for prayers, before going to the different classrooms.

"Where is the new girl, Ann Miller?" inquired Sister Bridget, a stern, forbidding-looking nun. No one answered. "Lizzie Raynor, go look for her." Susie Forge was on her knees with head bent, her lips already murmuring in devotion. Mary Crane smiled at the fulfillment of her prediction.

Lizzie Raynor after some search found the delinquent crouched in a corner, sobbing. "What is the matter, dear? Don't you know you will be punished if you are not in time for prayers? You are a Catholic, then why not come willingly?"

"I want to go home."

"This is your home now. You are all alone in

the world and you will be well cared for and educated here."

"And always be called the charity girl! I have only been here a short while, yet every girl hates me already."

"No, no, I like you. Come, quick, Sister Bridget is waiting."

"Where did you find her, Lizzie?" asked the nun as the two came in."

"In a corner of the yard crying because she is called the 'charity girl' and because no one loves her," replied Lizzie bravely.

"The girls will remember that whoever makes such a remark again will be severely punished. As for you, Ann, you are not grateful. Make yourself lovable and you will be loved. You will be deprived of your bread at three o'clock." Ann returned a black look of defiance, but made no answer.

After prayers the pupils separated and went to their various classrooms.

Some weeks afterward the Angelus bell rang, the prayer was said, luncheon was taken and the girls swarmed and scattered over the large grounds. "Don't throw anything at me," screamed Ann Miller, as she quickly dodged a little stick thrown by one of the girls.

"There," said Mary Crane, "she has been here a month and she is crosser and more hateful than ever. Love her, indeed!"

"Wait till I get at you, Mary Crane," resumed Ann shaking her fist; "if I was only your size."

"Ah, but you are not."

"I am coming anyway," and jumping, she accidentally threw Susie Forge plump on the grass.

"For shame!" cried all the girls in chorus. "Ann, I am sorry and astonished that you are so rude. Don't you see poor Susie is not strong; she can't stand much," said Lizzie Raynor.

"Indeed, Miss Lizzie, I didn't mean to——"

"Hold!" cried Sister Bridget, who was accompanied by Sister Benedicta. "Let no one stir until we have examined all of you."

Susie Forge picked up Ann's handkerchief which had fallen to the ground and put it in Ann's pocket unobserved by all. There was a lull among the girls, the chattering ceased. Sister Benedicta spoke:

"Girls, I have been robbed of five dollars in silver, which lay wrapped in a piece of paper in my drawer. One piece is marked. I just now went to bring it to Mother Therese, when it was not to be found. Mind you, I accuse no one, only I want every girl to turn her pocket inside out. You must not think harshly of me—I see some of you blushing and frowning—and you will not, when I tell you that last month I missed various little things and I am determined to catch the thief."

Many eyes turned to the charity girl, who stood with her arms by her side, sullen and threatening.

"Come, let us begin work," said Sister Bridget. The girls commenced turning pockets, some a little slowly, as they contained sundry little tid-bits taken clandestinely from the table.

"Don't fear, Ellen, you are forgiven to-day for

such a petty offense, turn over boldly. Here, little Susie, though it is scarcely necessary for you, you angel. Of course, you have not got it. "Here, Miss Ann, hurry up," said Sister Benedicta.

"I haven't got it," retorted Ann.

"Put out your pocket. What, you won't!" with a sharp slap Sister Benedicta turned out the pocket, when lo! her handkerchief containing a package of brown paper fell to the ground and out of it rolled ten half dollars, one piece had the mark of a cross on it. The majority of the girls simultaneously cried out, "The thief! I knew she had it!"

Lizzie Raynor cried, "Oh, Ann! how could you be so wicked?"

"See, the defiant child, with her eyes glittering, not a tear in them; she is not sorry for what she has done. But she *shall* be punished until she is sorry." Sister Bridget shook her fiercely.

"I can't be sorry for what I did not do. As sure as heaven, as sure as Christ is above us, I didn't do it," said the child in agony.

"Close her mouth, the little blasphemer," spoke the irate Sister Bridget.

"I shall not punish you now, I am not answerable for myself, Ann, but you must feel it sorely. To deny it, too, is doubly wrong," and Sister Benedicta folded her arms and walked away.

"I shall deny it at confession; too," shrieked the child.

"Punish her, whip her now," said Sister Bridget, as she followed Sister Benedicta.

"No, not now," answered she.

"Won't you catch it," added Jennie Fox, maliciously.

Ann rolled in the grass in her grief. The girls all except Lizzie and Grace left her to her disgrace.

"Can't we beg her off, Lizzie? She is such a child."

"Grace, we must try. Let us make haste; Sister Benedicta is in the room upstairs, ready to give a music lesson when the bell rings.

"Sister Benedicta," spoke Lizzie, "Grace and I have come to entreat you to forgive Ann. She is a mere child, and think how deficient her training must have been; she has everything to learn."

"Maybe she didn't take it," timidly suggested Grace.

"Not take it, child! the evidence is overwhelming."

"But a child without parents," pleaded Grace.

"And without religious training, brought up in ignorance, stupidity and poverty," added Lizzie.

"She is a real bad little girl," returned Sister Benedicta, still a tear twinkled in her eye; "she runs away from prayers and from catechism, too."

"Yes, that is true," continued Lizzie. "Dear Sister, you be the one to teach her the forgiveness of sin, of our holy religion and soften that stony little heart."

"Dear children, you have conquered, I shall not touch her. Only give her a few more prayers. A few more Aves, that is all, but I cannot like the child until I see a change in her."

"On my knees, dear Sister, I thank you," replied Lizzie, kissing her hand.

Grace took the nun's hand, kissed it and let a tear fall on it.

Sister Benedicta waved them a smiling adieu; when they were gone tears moistened her eyes, just as those bright, young girls softened her heart.

"Here, jump up, Ann, you are pardoned, no blows, no being put to bed without supper, only some prayers to make you better. Grace and I obtained the pardon for you. Are you not glad?" asked Lizzie.

"I am thankful for your kindness, young ladies," answered the child, "but the blow has struck here," and she solemnly placed her hand over her heart. "I am bad, I am stubborn, but not a thief."

"God will let that person be found out some day," continued Lizzie, more with a view to quiet the child's passion than with any faith in her assertions.

"Do you think so, too, Miss Grace?"

"Indeed I do; now try to be good and if you want anything ask me, I shall give it to you."

"You are our protégée now, you must be good for our sake," added Lizzie.

"I don't know what that means."

"You are in a way under our care."

"I will try my best to be good," responded Ann.

CHAPTER VI.

"Oh, Amelia, how beautiful you are to-day! You seem to be molded into your black silk; your white chip bonnet becomes you to perfection and with your white gloves you look elegant. You are the prettiest teacher in the Sunday-school," exclaimed Alice Hill, in a burst of admiration.

"Not including a pretty little Presbyterian girl called Alice."

"I am what you call pretty, but you are grand. How I do love this dear day. Charlie is such a gay teacher!"

"And apt scholar, I should judge. He follows your method very closely. I love the day because the very atmosphere breathes devotion to God. The tired laborer yields to the influence of the holy calm, the over-tasked clerk, the wearied seamstress, the merchant, banker, lawyer bless God for this day of sweet repose. I bless the name of God and feel happy to think that so many besides me are enjoying themselves. Then, I am also devotedly attached to my Bible class. Those young, bright, joyous creatures are all eager to learn the word of God. Here comes the carriage. Sam, you are too early for church. Father is not feeling well to-day and will ride. My sister and I shall walk."

"Yes, misses, I'se on time," said the colored coachman, touching his hat.

"Everybody is out to-day. We are ready now. Here is Charlie." Alice sprang gayly down the steps; Amelia came with measured tread.

"Do you know," said Mr. Bennett, "I think Mr. Everard will come to church to-day? He and I were talking about religion—I didn't know there was a Jew in the world so liberal minded as he is—and he said he had never come in contact with Presbyterians, knew nothing of their doctrines or ceremonials. I told him to come to-day and hear our glorious old minister; that the sect, and especially the *people*, were the best, the very best in the world. That is just what I said."

"Oh, what a boaster!" returned Alice, her fair face rippling with laughter.

Amelia walked faster and with a displeased look, broke out, "What an intrusive fellow!"

"Let us convert him for his assumption." Again the face of Alice beamed with smiles and Bennett laughed outright.

"It might not be well," returned Amelia.

"I believe with Paul," continued Alice earnestly, "that Jesus is 'a light' for Jew and Gentile." Amelia shrugged her shoulders and contracted her brows.

Before church services began Mark Everard walked in and sat down in a pew near the door. Mr. Hill coming in directly after, he followed him with his eyes and saw the profiles of Amelia and Alice.

"You will dine with us to-day, Charlie," said Alice as the services were concluded.

"I will do whatever you bid me. I am your slave," answered he decidedly.

"I don't want any slaves. At all events you would not be a good one. You are too dainty and too good and too honest."

"And what else?"

"Nothing." Alice blushed a little. "See how long it takes Amelia to come. I shall jump into the carriage and wait until she and papa come. You may follow," and she suited the action to the words.

"I won't, won't I?" added Bennett, jumping in after her.

Amelia walked slowly, leaning lightly on her father's arm. A sudden jostle and her fan dropped out of her hand.

"Oh, father, my fan is broken, I know."

The word had scarcely escaped her lips when a deep, thrilling voice exclaimed, "Here, Madam, is your fan. Good-day, Mr. Hill."

"Thank you," replied Amelia, in her soft, melodious voice. She raised her head and saw two deep blue eyes fastened upon her and then their owner passed on.

"Is your fan injured at all? I know you value it because it is the gift of a dear friend," said Mr. Hill, as he seated himself with the others in the conveyance.

"It is not damaged, father. I can imagine who it was that picked it up. It was Mr. Everard, was it not?"

"Yes, dear. I have met him quite often, and as he is not presuming, have frequently spoken to him. He has been retained in a lawsuit where many thousands of dollars are involved, but his reward will depend upon his success. You have

heard of young Niles coming back to claim his father's estate. He has been away since he was ten years old and he is now thirty-three. The other relatives are in possession of the property and say that he died at sea some five years ago and that they can prove it. To identify him is the trouble. No one here remembers him nor can any one trace the faintest likeness to the child of twenty-three years ago. Everard's future depends upon this case and his prospects are very slim," said Mr. Hill.

"So, Mr. Everard gets the case because no other lawyer would take it up, is that the way to understand it?" questioned Amelia.

"Exactly, my dear. I seriously thought of undertaking it myself—the claimant applied to me first of all—but as the chances are so slim and I am feeling none too well of late, I concluded to leave it alone."

"Amelia," said Alice, clapping her hands gleefully, "you are indebted to Mr. Everard now."

"Nonsense, Alice, I more than paid him with my thanks. Mr. Bennett, why were you not there to pick up my fan?"

"Yes, why wasn't I there?" returned Bennett.

"Thank heaven, we are at home," said Alice, blushing deeply.

"Now that luncheon is over, papa," said Alice as all four of them seated themselves in the sitting-room, after partaking of the noonday meal, "and I know that you are in a good humor, I have a proposition to make."

"Well, my dear, what momentous thing can it be?"

"It is very weighty," replied Alice, as she went up to her father, "but then blame Charlie."

"Oh, Eve, I plead guilty without trial; if you are going to expel us from Eden, Mr. Hill, expel us together," and Bennett laughed facetiously.

"Proceed, Alice," said her father with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Papa, Charlie says the Bank is going to foreclose a mortgage on the Widow Smith's house. Amelia and I went to see her yesterday; she has three little children and tries to support her family by sewing. To say nothing of the mortgage, which is only a thousand dollars, she cannot even pay the interest. Now, I want to make up the thousand dollars by subscription from our wealthy people here. It would be a shame for us if a deserving woman lost the roof over her head and was driven into the street with her helpless little ones," and the cheeks of Alice glowed with indignation.

"Well spoken, my little Samaritan," responded her father, "but bless my heart, do you think you can collect one thousand dollars? It is a large sum to beg for such a purpose. If it were a hundred I should not say a word."

"Never mind that, papa, dear, only give your consent that I may go around and beg, yes, beg," said Alice, standing on her tiptoes, "and I shall see to it that I shall get the money. And, papa, I want Amelia to go with me, I can't go alone, you know."

"To be sure not. Well, Amelia, what do you say to your sister's proposition, because I shall not check the prompting of her dear, kind heart."

Alice kissed her father several times and her eyes were suffused with tears.

"Dear father, I know the motives of Alice are the purest and the best; but would it not be wiser to put this affair into the hands of older people?" answered Amelia.

"I think you are mistaken, dear; all hearts will open to the fresh, joyous Alice, appealing for the widow and orphans. You have my blessing, my child," and Mr. Hill laid his hand affectionately on his young daughter's head.

"Well, father, you are right," returned Amelia, "but I cannot go with Alice. I could not assist her; if any one were to refuse us, the denial would seem personal. My heart sinks at the idea. I am not so brave as Alice."

"Indeed, you are braver and better. Last summer, Charlie—yes, I shall tell—she went amongst people afflicted with that dreadful scourge, the cholera, when I couldn't for the world or the life of me, stir out of the house. Here I remained with my teeth chattering and my hands blue, though the thermometer ranged from 90 to 100 degrees, from nothing but fright." Alice shuddered at the thought.

"Yes, Mr. Bennett," said her father, "Amelia is a noble girl. In spite of prayers and protestations, she went among the sick and dying, saying, with pale lips, but unflinching courage, that duty called her. What could I do, notwithstanding my opposition, but kiss the darling girl and invoke God's blessing on her head? God heard an old man's prayer and let her live."

Amelia had risen, and weeping, threw herself on her father's neck.

Bennett said with genuine emotion, "Another Florence Nightingale and one worthy of such a father."

"You see, my dear Charlie," said Mr. Hill, well pleased with the last remark, "I can say like Cornelia, 'Here are my jewels.'"

"But we are only girls, troublesome girls, papa, and to-morrow morning I am going to ask Mrs. Whitman, a staid little body, to accompany me and put this town under contribution. It will do me good to see some of the old stingy fellows, for I shall get precious little from the women, I know, opening their hearts and their purse strings. I am going to call on Mr. Berkhoff, the lawyer and all of *them*," laughed Alice.

"Don't, Alice," said her sister; "from Berkhoff you will get nothing but rudeness, perhaps."

"He will stand and chaffer about five cents, I know, but then I patronize him and is not my custom worth something, Miss Amelia?" quizzically inquired Alice.

"You'll do, Miss Alice; I will subscribe fifty dollars," and Bennett took out his pencil.

"It is Sunday," quietly remarked Amelia.

"Oh, never mind, Amelia, he may forget by to-morrow. To-day is the very best day for such things. Don't the church deacons pass the plates on Sunday, not once, but two or three times?"

"Alice," said Mr. Hill, laughing, "you are your father's daughter, and if you had been a man, you would have been a great lawyer."

"Undoubtedly; here, Mr. Bennett, put your

name down," said Alice, bringing a sheet of foolscap. "There, now, it is a legal document," as he signed his name and the amount.

"See here, Alice, I am going to have pay for this sometime," said Bennett, in a low tone, while Amelia and her father were conversing together, "a kiss, you know, poor me! I am always longing for one and in vain."

"If you will let me do the same to every one who contributes fifty dollars, if not—why, you will have to wait until papa says I can be your wife," returned Alice, becoming crimson.

"For heaven's sake, don't drive a fellow crazy, I shall wait by all means."

"I thought so. Here, papa, sign your name," said Alice.

"Are you not going to release your old father?" said Mr. Hill, taking the pencil from her hand and writing his name for fifty dollars.

"You dear, old papa," exclaimed Alice, kissing her father. Mr. Bennett looked at her and made a wry face.

"I shall subscribe to-morrow, Alice," said Amelia. "After dinner, if father is willing, we shall all go and hear the evening lecture."

"To be sure, Amelia."

"I shall put up my paper and suspend operations for the day."

Alice was up bright and early in the morning, prepared for her work.

"Here, sister," said Amelia, "let me sign my name for fifty, you know father gave it to me for a new dress, but I have so many that I am glad I shall not have to make another."

"Ah, Amelia, your heart is pure gold. You are all gold!"

"Heaven forbid! I do not want to be worse than a Midas."

"Now, Mrs. Whitman," said Alice to that lady, who expressed her willingness to accompany her, "we shall call upon the ladies in the morning, otherwise they will all be 'out,' and make the gentlemen afternoon visits, and we shall try to get the cash, too, no notes."

At four o'clock in the afternoon they had collected nine hundred dollars and had from time to time deposited the money in Mr. Hill's office.

"One hundred dollars more! From where will that come?" asked Alice.

"That will be hard work, my dear," replied Mrs. Whitman. "We have not been to Feld's store yet, let us go there."

"Mrs. Feld, you know, has generously given us fifty dollars; more than some of our very pious church members, and I shall not call upon her husband unless I am absolutely compelled. I shall go to Mr. Everard, he has not much I hear, but he is a man and not a woman working for three mouths besides."

"As you will, my dear," returned meek Mrs. Whitman.

"Mr. Everard," said Alice, after being shown into that gentleman's office, "I trust you will pardon us strangers for calling upon you for assistance, but feeling that misery and helplessness appeal to the hearts of all, we come to ask your aid for the widow and orphans. Read this paper; it will tell you all."

Everard merely glanced at it and stood for a moment irresolute, not considering whether he should give or not, but how much his nearly depleted purse would allow him.

"Will twenty-five dollars help you a little, ladies?" said he, and he handed them a twenty-dollar bill and a five-dollar gold piece.

"A thousand thanks; we are so grateful. Please write your name and the amount," said Alice, sweetly.

"It is not necessary to sign my name, is it?"

"Yes, yes," returned Alice, "the widow must know the names of the donors."

"I beg your pardon, will it not be embarrassing for her to know the persons to whom she is indebted?"

"She can pray for them individually."

"Is that better than collectively?"

"To be sure," laughed Alice.

"What a nice gentleman," said Mrs. Whitman, as they were on the sidewalk; "I had no idea *those* people could be so nice."

"Now comes the tug of war; we are going to Berkhoff's."

Mr. Berkhoff was at the farther end of the store, which was very deep, and with him were Mrs. and Miss Silverbaum, regaling themselves with some May cherries.

"I wish we had met Mr. Berkhoff alone. I dislike those vulgar people, Mrs. Whitman."

"Who are they, my dear? If they are as good-natured as their portly figures would indicate there will be nothing to fear from them. Oh, horror!" said Mrs. Whitman, as she saw upon

coming nearer that Alice did not err in calling them "those vulgar people."

"Look at that woman stuffing her mouth with cherries and the girl eating, talking and laughing all at once."

"How do you do, ladies?" said Berkhoff, advancing. "Have some cherries. They are good, I assure you," continued he, as they declined to take any. "They are heavy, but you must spit out the skins. What can I sell you to-day? Things cheap, cheaper as dirt."

"Mr. Berkhoff, we have come on a different business to-day," and Alice's heart quaked within her. Here a clerk stepped up to Mr. Berkhoff, saying: "Mr. Daniels says, sir, that \$2.25 is enough for the shoes; here it is."

"Isn't he charged \$2.50 for them?"

"Yes, sir, that is what we always ask."

"And so help me God that's what we shall always have. Take that back; wait, I will see to it myself," and Berkhoff turned on his heel without a word of excuse. He swore and stormed. In a few moments he came back with a smile and \$2.50 in his hand. "Here, John," said he to an errand boy, at the same time writing an address on a paper, "take this, as you have nothing to do, and collect the five cents the woman owes over two months. Tell her it is a balance on a piece of velvet ribbon."

Mrs. Whitman and Alice had not spoken a word, but stood like statues looking at each other.

"Now, ladies, for your business."

"Mr. Berkhoff, we have come for a little aid for a widow and some orphans." Alice unrolled

the paper. She trembled so that words failed her and the anticipated seventy-five dollars vanished like a mirage.

"Here, cashier, fifty dollars. Could give it to no better purpose," said Berkhoff decisively to Mrs. and Miss Silverbaum. "Ladies, I wish I could give more. Will this sum be enough?"

"We need but twenty-five dollars more," returned Alice, breathless with delight and scarcely venturing to believe her own eyes.

"Ma," said Rebecca Silverbaum, nudging her mother and speaking in a tone she meant to be inaudible, but which was plainly heard, "can't we give that?"

"No," replied her mother, "I give ten dollars. Here, ladies."

"And I give five dollars. I am a little orphan myself. I shall save it up another way, ma, don't fear," said Rebecca.

"Right, Miss Rebecca, you have the right kind of heart and now there is only ten dollars lacking," resumed Mr. Berkhoff.

Mrs. Whitman looked around at the clerks and said, "May we ask them?" This was her first appeal, but the spontaneous liberality of Rebecca and her mother encouraged her. "I should rather not. Poor fellows, they get none too much," said Berkhoff. After a moment's consideration, he resumed. "I will give you the other ten. Too bad to have you tramping around town for that trifle. You look tired. Cashier, ten dollars."

Alice with a choking sensation and a quavering voice, said, "I thank you not once, but a thousand times."

"That's all right, Miss. I was poor in Germany and in New York, too, I know how it feels."

"I thank you all three in the name of the widow and her children," returned Alice, her sweet face beaming with gratitude and with the consciousness of performing a good deed.

"Thanks," echoed Mrs. Whitman.

When Alice turned off the principal street she walked so fast that she nearly ran. "Oh, child, I am quite out of breath," said her friend.

"Beg pardon, Mrs. Whitman, but I am so happy, I must give vent to my feelings in some way. If I were home, where I soon shall be, I would sing, chatter and do all kinds of extraordinary things; here I walk fast. Mrs. Whitman, I shall call for you to-morrow and we shall go together to Mrs. Smith and bring her the happy tidings."

"Bring Amelia, don't forget her, dear; her feelings are so refined, I always feel as if I were in a purer atmosphere when I am with her. Bye-bye."

"Good-bye. Many thanks."

"Well, Alice? Successful, I know. It is written on your face. Father told me how very near at four o'clock you were to the thousand. Hurry in; father and Mr. Bennett are in the sitting-room waiting for you," and Amelia kissed her tenderly.

"Darling," cried her father, "are you——"

"Successful, gentlemen!" exclaimed Alice.

"You dear girl, I have been very uneasy. Sun-stroke——"

"Sunstroke in May? You are too anxious, Charlie——"

"Sit down, let me fan you." Charlie leaned over her chair and used the fan vigorously.

"Why, Charlie, you raise a whirlwind. Sit down, I want to relate my experiences."

"To be sure a little heroine."

"Our canary has twittered and made plaintive calls for you all day," said Amelia, taking her hand.

"How imaginative, Amelia!" returned Alice, kissing her. "I am happy now, though it has been a hard, a very hard day for me, and only the thought that if I did not accomplish my work the widow and her children would be homeless enabled me to keep up my courage. I was astonished at some members of the church, the most pious, too, who wanted me to feed them on scripture, but then," with a smile, "I gave them scripture with interest and told them exactly what Christ meant, and that his pure, simple laws were not to be misunderstood. There was rich, old Mrs. Henderson, she wanted to evade giving. She promised this, that, everything in the future. I told her it was now that she must give. I quoted, 'Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.' The 'everlasting' punishment brought out fifty dollars. She groaned as she gave me the money. I then said to her, 'the righteous shall go into the life eternal.' She smiled and looked happy at her heavenly investment."

"For heaven's sake, stop," said Bennett, roaring with laughter. "You want a fellow to die of convulsions!"

"Charlie, you are horrid. But let me give you a surprise. Mr. Everard gave me twenty-five with regrets, mind you, that he could not give more. Berkhoff in the sympathy of his heart gave me fifty and afterward ten more. Mrs. Silverbaum and her daughter, without my asking—just from hearing me appeal to Mr. Berkhoff—gave fifteen dollars."

"That speaks well for their hearts," said Mr. Hill.

"And for their souls," said Alice. "They were all very gracious to-day."

"I wish you could have obtained the money without *them*," added Amelia.

"Amelia, they are not all bad. Papa, you must take up the mortgage in your office at ten to-morrow, to get the release signed. Mrs. Whitman, Amelia and I shall bring it to the widow to-morrow."

The following day Mrs. Smith's heart was made glad by the presentation of the release. "May the God preserve and bless you all; may you never know any care. Thanks, good Mrs. Whitman. They say, Miss Alice, your kind heart did the most of it; these children shall never go to bed without praying for you." The tears streamed down the widow's cheeks. "Do you believe in prayer, Miss Alice?"

"The prayers of the righteous avail much,' I value them especially from their innocent lips," answered the young girl, trembling with emotion.

"You must want for nothing," said Amelia; "we three are willing and able to do much for you."

"Ladies, angels, I may say," returned the widow with dignity, "I have accepted this present from you and the kindness of the people at large with a grateful heart, but to take more, unless deprived altogether of health, God forbid. My children have a home and I can now work with a light heart. May God reward you, I never can. This day shall be commemorated as a festival."

"I am glad I acted on Mr. Everard's suggestion and did not, as I had first intended, give her the subscription roll with the names attached," said Alice softly.

In this case it was difficult to tell who was happier, the receiver or the givers.

CHAPTER VII.

"Grace, Susie Forge is very ill; she was taken last night with a severe hemorrhage of the lungs. Her friends have been telegraphed for. I have been to see her this morning. She asked me if I thought she was very sick; I told her 'yes,' but not so ill that she couldn't get better. The doctor said she must keep quiet and not talk. Upon that the darling child cried, 'Where's poor Ann Miller, I want to see her.' I told her 'no,' that Ann was too noisy, too inconsiderate to let her come in, but she only stopped talking when I promised if she should grow worse that she should see her. I think she wishes to tell Ann to be good and all about heaven, at least, what she thinks about it. What a good creature she is." Lizzie Raynor put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Poor darling! I think Ann is growing better, though she is sullen yet."

"Sister Benedicta says she has not missed a pin since, so you see poor Ann appreciates her kindness and our intercession."

"Once in a while she is demonstrative when I am alone; she covers my hand with kisses."

"Lizzie and Grace," said a tall girl coming up to them, "you are wanted in the infirmary. Go up immediately."

"I tremble, Lizzie. Can Susie be dying?"

"I fear so," was the answer, and the two girls ran lightly upstairs to the sick room.

There lay Susie with her head low and her face whiter, if possible, than the sheets which covered her. Sister Benedicta, who was a good nurse and loved the child, was with her.

"Darling, don't speak," said Lizzie, moving up to her side and taking her hand caressingly. Susie did not reply, but looked anxiously toward the door; it opened and in walked Ann, her eyes and face red with weeping. It was evident from her calmness that she had been instructed before she came in how to conduct herself.

"Come, Ann," said Sister Benedicta, "Susie wants to speak to you."

Lizzie went to the foot of the bed, where Grace was standing.

"Raise my head a little, dear Sister," spoke Susie in a feeble voice. "There, now I am more comfortable. What I am going to say is hard, very hard, but my confessor says I must do it, if I want Christ to take me. Sister Benedicta, forgive me, I took those little things from your room. I took the money and when I saw you coming I put Ann's handkerchief, which had fallen out, and the money into her pocket at the same time. I knew it was wrong," said the little sinner in a pitiful voice. "Ann, forgive——" the blood gurgled to her mouth and issued from it. She closed her eyes, gave two or three convulsive gasps and was dead.

"Susie!" shrieked Ann, "why didn't God take me? Still," and she sank on her knees, clasped her hands together, lifted up her eyes and in a

thrilling voice, said, "Father, I thank Thee that these people know I am not a thief."

Sister Benedicta with blanched face took Ann up in her arms and said, "Ann, I shall have to ask your forgiveness. The evidence was so plain and strong, you know, who could doubt it? I shall always love you now because you are truthful."

Grace and Lizzie came and covered her with kisses; for the moment the dead was forgotten.

"I shall have to cry again. I am not used to so much kindness," and Ann went in the corner, sat down and wept to her heart's content.

They all three bent over the dead child. "What could have induced her to do those dreadful things?" asked Grace.

"God only knows. Her meek and loving ways won my heart. Grace, when you even mentioned that Ann might not have taken the money I felt angry at you. Poor Susie, to die without her father or relatives, with that trouble on her mind; it must have been terrible! I knew when she first came here she was a fragile flower and not long for this world. Poor creature," and Sister Benedicta imprinted a kiss on her cold forehead.

Two days after Susie's funeral as the morning prayers were over, Sister Benedicta came in and said, "Sister Bridget, I wish to speak a few words to the girls assembled here. Ann Miller, stand up. I suppose it is known to all of you that Ann did not steal anything from me. Girls, Ann is an honest, truthful girl, greatly wronged, though unintentionally by me. I will not say who did the wicked acts, though all in this room are so far

free from the execrable vice of stealing. If any of your day-scholars have mentioned this affair at home I wish you would vindicate Ann's character. I shall vouch for it." They all understood and appreciated Sister Benedicta's delicacy in not accusing the dead, for Grace and Lizzie had not been long in spreading the truth.

"Sister Benedicta, Sister Bridget, may we kiss her?" cried many of the girls.

"No, no," laughed Sister Benedicta, "you would smother her, there are too many of you. But any girl who has any little token may, after school hours, give it to her. I hope, that as she has heretofore been shunned by you, so she will now be loved. The Mother of our community is much pleased with my account of Ann and she will receive special favors.

The girls clapped their hands in gladness and Jennie Fox, who was her most bitter and spiteful enemy before, now clapped the loudest. The heroine of the hour cried softly to herself.

CHAPTER VIII.

Knowledge is light ; it is, when properly used, both a blessing and a benefit. It breaks the chains of both mental and physical slavery, facilitates the execution of labor, alleviates pain, invents, discovers and creates the beautiful in art. The march of intellect dissipates prejudice and removes all obstacles to the goal of its high destiny—the emancipation and universal brotherhood of man. When the gold of man's opinion is refined from the dross and peace on earth established, the mission of knowledge will be accomplished and the greatest earthly good will be attained.

"Grace, am I thin?" asked Maud Lee, a girl who might safely be marked down for one hundred and forty pounds avoirdupois.

"No, indeed you are not. I suppose you study very hard. I must look miserable, mamma says I do."

"And I," broke in Letitia with a doleful look, "I am 'worn to a shadow,' all for this examination. It's a consolation for us, though, and for our future husbands, too, hem, hem, that we have poured over the arguments of philosophers as to whether light is an emanation or an undulation, and that we know not which to accept the wave or corpuscular theory."

"I think every one should take the corpuscular

for that must make muscle," added Maud, with a laugh.

"No doubt you think so. You give evidence of the latter," said Julia Radcliffe.

"Never mind, Miss Julia," spoke Bessie Hait, a girl with bright hair known by the name of red, "I will wager anything that of all the girls standing here you will be married the first. Letitia may be next, as for you, Grace, though you oughtn't to marry before the others, as you are the youngest of the graduates in prospective, I think you will be an old maid; you are so quiet. Have you any lovers, Grace?"

"Certainly not. I am going to school yet."

"What difference does that make? My parents were wise to lock me up in the convent, but I see a handsome fellow once in a while. Sister Benedicta took me with her to buy white swiss for my graduation dress. I passed a whole row of smiling clerks before we came where the swiss was. The man who waited on us was a handsome fellow. Sister Benedicta said, pointing to a piece, 'Take this, this is what you want,' but I would not—I was not to be suited so easily. 'It is too coarse,' I said. 'Look at it again,' said she, then I raised my head and laughed or rather smiled over her head. Mercy! didn't that man bring down swiss, loads of it. Sister Benedicta became confused, told me I was too fastidious in my taste, and directed her attention to some other purchase she had to make. That was just what I wanted; then the clerk and I talked about the swiss, we examined the swiss and I bought the swiss. Holy Mother, save us!" said the girl,

changing her jocular tone, "here comes Sister Bridget. She would pitch into me like a tigress if she knew what I just told you. Sister Benedicta has more heart."

"What is the matter with you, Bessie? Your face is very red. It is too warm out here for you girls," said Sister Bridget.

"I have been trying to refresh my mind by talking about the distances and magnitude of the heavenly bodies, the diurnal and nocturnal phenomena when Mercury and Venus enter into an inferior and superior conjunction."

"Stop, Bessie, this very moment. I know that in books you know everything from Alpha to Omega, but do you know who took three peaches from the refectory?"

"Sister Bridget, I am sure you can't mean me!"

"Indeed, I do, then, Bessie. In all the years you have been here you have not been cured of one great fault, that is telling untruths. If it were not a few days before the examination I should punish you for a month. Look out, though, I have my eye on you. Be sure, when you go to confession, to tell that you told another story," and away stalked Sister Bridget.

"That horrid thing!" exclaimed Bessie as soon as the Sister was beyond hearing. "I know she became a nun because she was an old maid, and she don't like to see young faces. Hateful old body!"

The bell rang for lessons and the girls made haste to reach the schoolroom. "What a wicked girl that Bessie is," said Grace to Letitia as they went in.

"Everybody, you know, can't be such a paragon of goodness as you are. Come on, dear." These words were spoken with affected sincerity.

The eventful day at length arrived. The examination of the scholars of the convent was conducted by the Fathers of the College. Their method was interesting both to pupils and to the audiences, which annually assembled on these occasions. These exercises occurring in the latter end of June, the heat was always intense and dresses of thin material were absolutely necessary. They were all made high in the neck and with long sleeves. Numberless were the injunctions "to buy plenty of stuff to cover bones," so the eyes of monster man could not rest on lovely shoulders.

"Mary Lile," said Sister Bridget, sternly, as she glanced over the assembled girls, "come to me." The girl obeyed. "Did I not tell you time and time again to have your dress made high in the neck?"

"Why, Sister, it is made nearly up to my chin."

"Chin, did you say?" answered the now exasperated nun, "with your neck uncovered almost to your shoulders; here, give me your handkerchief. Put this around your neck."

"I shall smother," said the girl, with tears in her eyes and with difficulty repressing a sob.

"No, you won't. Put it on and take your seat."

Mary was so overcome at the idea of a handkerchief around her throat in such weather and on such a day that she did not stir.

Sister Bridget raised her hand to put the hand-

kerchief on herself and Sister Benedicta, who was standing near, kindly came to her relief.

"Mary Lile, no wonder this dress looks low in the neck with that broad lace all turned down in place of up. I know your mother meant it should go this way," and she pressed the lace so it remained standing.

"Now, Sister Bridget, is it not all right?"

Sister Bridget, not liking tearful faces on this important day and admiring the ready tact of the Sister, allowed herself to be propitiated.

"Yes, it will answer, Mary; thank Sister Benedicta for her quickness and go to your seat."

"Thank you," said Mary, but her eyes spoke more.

"Sit down and do not be so careless next time," returned Sister Benedicta.

"See," said Letitia in a low tone, nudging Grace, "there is the handsome lawyer, Mark Everard, with a beautiful bouquet in his hand. Think it is for me. See the Hills coming in with their grand airs. That oldest girl walks as if the boards were not good enough for her. Heavens! see the Silverbaums, the old lady with her broad, fat hands full of rings and no gloves on. Too warm, I suppose. Look at her bringing out her fan. She will make it go all the time now like a windmill. Look at Rebecca laughing. Aha! I know the reason, there comes Berkhoff. Do you see him?"

"No, I don't."

"You never see anything. Turn your head this way. We have the advantage this year, we are graduates, we sit on the front bench."

"How you do make remarks about everybody, Letitia!"

"That is just what I am here for, eyes to see, tongue to talk," answered Letitia, putting her hands to those organs.

"Berkhoff is sitting down by Rebecca. I wish some one else had taken that seat. How that girl is after that man. It is disgusting!"

"He came after her," Grace ventured to remark.

"You think so! I thought maybe he came for the chemical experiments, to see us analyze flowers, hear the essays read, examine the paintings, criticize the music, et cetera."

"Oh, Letitia," returned Grace, "don't talk so mockingly. I think he is able to judge music. He expresses himself well about it. Not in good language, but as if he understood it."

"He understands nothing but dollars and cents! He has ruined the trade since he came here and I hope he will eventually ruin himself."

"How uncharitable! There come mamma and papa, their dear hands full of flowers."

"Well, you need not cry about them, Grace. There come my father and mother laden with flowers. Did you ever! If they have not brought three of the children with them. Mother is so foolish. I begged her this morning not to bring one with her and just see her in this heat."

"Aunt is growing so stout. She must feel the heat so much the more."

"It is better than being too thin," retorted Letitia, who was always angry when any one but

herself alluded to her mother's growing corpulency. "Your mother looks so haggard."

"I am afraid poor mamma is not very well. Poor, dear mamma," said Grace, and the tears sprang to her eyes.

"No tears now; here are the Fathers with their long coats; hope they won't have long questions. Who is that rushing up to the Hills all smiles. Is it Charlie Bennett?"

"Be still. Don't you see Sister Bridget looking this way? How nervous I am."

Lizzie Raynor, Julia Radcliffe, Letitia, Grace and some half a dozen girls from the Sunny South were the graduates of the year. The ordeal came and had to pass as do other eventful things of life. The exercises of the day closed with music, which was liberally interspersed between the oral examination, the reading of essays, the awarding of diplomas and the distribution of prizes.

Grace acquitted herself with more than ordinary credit, notwithstanding her nervousness, and received the customary reward of merit from the nuns and testimonials from friends in the shape of innumerable bouquets and baskets of flowers.

The valedictory address read by Lizzie Raynor sympathetically affected the audience as usual; many bright, young faces were wet with tears and older eyes were dim, too. Grace was warmly attached to the teachers and to many of the scholars. To her it was a parting from friends, and many happy but now painful reminiscences passed through her mind as she bid adieu to the place with its associations forever. Tears invol-

untarily rolled down her cheeks and finally she put her handkerchief to her face and wept unrestrainedly.

"What are you crying for? It is all over now, the people are going home. Let me see your flowers. I declare, Mark Everard's card on this bouquet of yours. If he is handsome he doesn't know how to select flowers," said Letitia, with a toss of her head.

"I must run and kiss mamma before she goes home. I am going to say good-bye to all before I go. Here, mamma kiss me before you go," and Grace threw her arms around her mother's neck.

"Grace, dear," returned her mother after fondly kissing her, "don't you see Mr. Everard?"

"Excuse me, sir," said Grace; "I am a little excited I believe. I thank you for your pretty bouquet. How did you like the examination?"

"I was delighted and was especially pleased to see two Jewish girls among the graduates."

"Oh, Mr. Everard," asked Grace, impulsively, "if you did not know we were Jews could you read it in our faces? You look like a Christian."

"What a foolish question, Grace," said her mother.

"Well, I declare," laughed Everard, "to tell you the truth I cannot read it in your face, but your cousin, Miss Rheinberg, notwithstanding her beauty, has the type in the mannerisms of our race."

"It should not be so as she is born in this country," said Mrs. Feld.

"I believe," returned Mr. Everard, "that the ebullition of emotion and sentiment given expres-

sion in violent gestures and extravagant demonstrations have caused Judaism to be considered less a religion of ritualism and truisms than one of characteristics, which will take centuries to eliminate. But here come the Hills," and he took off his hat and bowed deeply. Mr. Hill, Alice and Bennett returned it. Amelia, not having been introduced to him, passed coldly on.

Alice also bowed to Mrs. Feld and Grace.

"What a charming girl that Miss Alice Hill is," said Grace.

"Yes, a nice, pretty girl; but the elder one——" Mark Everard did not conclude the sentence.

"Oh," said Mrs. Feld, "she is cold and proud, though she did nurse cholera patients last year. She does such things for religion, I think, and would walk under that duty right into the fire. No heart; never comes near Jews."

"Is that possible?" murmured Everard; "no heart, no heart!"

Grace, after bidding Mr. Everard good-bye and kissing her mother, went to make her final adieus to the girls.

"Well, Grace, you kissed your mother as if you were going on a voyage. My mother left with the children a little while ago; she could not wait any longer for Aunt Ruth. I think I saw Mr. Everard standing by your mother as you left them just now. What did he say?" questioned Letitia.

"He said you were beautiful."

"A nice manner he has of expressing things. He is mean; why didn't he send me flowers?"

"You know you are a gorgeous flower yourself."

Mr. Everard had brought the flowers because he thought it incumbent upon him to bring some and had given them to the person whose face and manner pleased him best.

"Look over yonder at that group of girls laughing and crying together. I warrant you they are promising to write to one another every week without having any thought of doing anything of the kind. Deceitful things. Here comes Lizzie. I have been moralizing on the hollowness——"

"Of the world?" interrupted Lizzie.

"No, of girls like us," continued Letitia, laughing dryly and walking off.

"Don't mind her, Lizzie."

Meek Lizzie folded her hands, saying in her sweet, pious way, "Let us talk of our future."

Her own future was to her a placid lake. She had no fears; she lived in a faith of her own and had marked out her destiny.

"Don't cry," said Grace, as Lizzie's eyes grew dim with tears. "I trust many happy days are in store for you? I detest your step-mother." She gave her head an emphatic toss, which sent her long golden curls flying around her.

"I weep not for myself, for I am a child of the Virgin and in her holy keeping, but you, dear friend, are leaving us all now without having professed the true faith, and know not the snares set in the world for the weak and unwary. Give me hope before you leave me here," and Lizzie looked on her tenderly.

"Why, you talk as if you were about to take the veil," replied Grace, and a slight tremor passed over her frame as she looked up to her companion, who was several years her senior.

"Yes, I have decided to be one of the great band of women entirely devoted to God."

Often after witnessing tempestuous scenes at home, Grace had come to school and seen those calm, passionless, contented faces of the nuns; then would those shady bowers and quiet retreats seem to say, "Enter, weary maiden, and find rest," but almost simultaneously with the whisperings would a dark shadow thrust itself before her and utter, "Forbear, peace here thou canst not find." She would then infold herself in her own religion, shake off the gloom, and say, "Never, never." But at this moment, though sad at parting, joyous and girlish visions of happiness floated through her mind, and at her friend's answer, she shuddered at the idea of immuring herself in convent walls and looked around with nervous fear, as if the place were a living tomb, blotting out those pictures which she had been drawing a moment before with such brilliant colors.

"Come, join hands in the good work," said Liz-zie, earnestly.

"Live here forever! never come out? Never!"

"Don't say that. I intend to be very happy here."

"You may be. Even if I wanted to come here, which I do not, I could not. The distance between our religions is too great. The way is not dark that I am now following."

"Grace, I believe you know very little about your religion, having been taught little and seeing less; so you don't very well know what it is."

"The little I know gives me light and I always follow that."

Sister Marguerite now joined the two and the word about "light," spoken by Grace, fell upon her ear and she remarked, "May the true celestial light and not a false one dissipate the darkness of your mind. When that time comes, which God grant may be soon, come to us. We shall willingly guide you to happiness. Think not then of your past sins for they shall be remitted when the consecrated oil shall anoint your head and the holy water touch you with the symbol of the cross."

CHAPTER IX.

"Congratulate you, Berkhoff, I hear you are engaged," said Everard, sauntering into the merchant's office.

"Thank you. Isn't my Rebecca a grand girl, good, pretty, strong and a heart as large as my iron safe, but different metal. It is like what is inside of it—gold," and Berkhoff's eyes fairly danced with joy.

"I think you have chosen well and that she will make a good wife."

"You may depend upon it she will. You had better follow me; there's a nice little girl just come out of school, Grace Feld. Just the girl for you—educated and soft and good."

"You are too kind, Berkhoff. I don't think of marrying yet. You are a prosperous business man; you are able to support a wife."

"Do you know, Everard, I knew a man in Jefferson City who told me a story, that when he was living in this place a boy ran away and that he met him (a man) years afterward and recognized him as Niles by a mark on the shoulders as he was undressing in the room they had together."

"Great heavens, a clew to my case!"

"I thought of it last night. It mixed in with my pleasure; now you make the best of it and get engaged, too."

"I beg you, man, not to mention a word of what you told me just now; the opposing counsel might bribe him, spirit him away. Niles and I are both poor and can do nothing but promise. If I can only secure this witness my future is made. I thank you, Berkhoff, I thank you; if ever I can do you a favor rely upon me it shall be done."

"I am all right now; don't know nothing. Now, you see, I don't drink, don't gamble—Everard smiled—you are thinking of those little poker games at Mrs. Silverbaum's; they don't amount to anything. But Feld is what I call a gambler. He don't drink so much any more, but he loses heavily at the gaming table. He must be a bad man so to forget his wife and child, such holy trusts."

"You are right, Berkhoff, but give me more particulars about my man. I shall telegraph immediately and if I ascertain that any one answering your description is there I shall be off for Jefferson City. Keep mum; not a word to a soul, not even to Miss Rebecca. She is too good, I know, to say a word, but she has a mother—your mother-in-law elect!"

"Mrs. Silverbaum is a good soul. I won't mention it to Rebecca; we will talk about other things. Ha! ha! love is a mighty good thing, a mighty fine thing; go try it."

"See, Rebecca, what I have brought for you?" said Berkhoff, as he entered Mrs. Silverbaum's house in the evening.

"Oh, my, what a ring! It is splendid. Did you buy it here?"

"No, indeed, my dear, I bought it in St. Louis, and when we are married we will take a trip there and see everything that is worth seeing. We will have a lovely time."

"Oh," said Mrs. Silverbaum, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, "it makes me cry to think, Rebecca, how happy your father was when he put the ring on my finger and said, 'you are more to me than gold or silver.'"

"Gold and silver, why, what is that in comparison to a true heart? I hate sordid people."

"Rebecca, you are a jewel," said Berkhoff in delight.

"You are poetical. You don't know me yet."

"No, indeed, you don't know that child, she has so much heart, all filled with love, wouldn't exchange you for a gold mine," returned Mrs. Silverbaum.

"You don't need to tell me nothing about her. I know her better than anybody. If I was a millionaire I would have no one else but you, Rebecca, and I know if I was as poor as Job's turkey you would have me, wouldn't you?" and he looked pleadingly into her eyes.

Rebecca slightly paled, but answered unhesitatingly, "without a doubt, Mr. Berkhoff."

"Call me Isaac, don't mister me."

"I don't like that name, I prefer to call you Berkhoff."

"Just as you like, dear, but as it is such a pleasant evening, supposing we take a walk and get some ice-cream."

There was a pause; Rebecca looked at her mother and her mother looked at Rebecca.

"Supposing your mother comes along, too, my girl," added Berkhoff, observing mother and daughter.

"We shall be ready this instant. I will bring your hat, ma, I can run quicker than you can," and Rebecca flew from the room.

"A good girl, Mr. Berkhoff. You know the saying, 'A good daughter, a good wife.'"

"Very true, my dear woman, very true," said Berkhoff, consoling himself with the reflection.

"Ready, Berkhoff," said Rebecca, blushing as she came in.

"Come, then, Rebecca, take my arm." He scratched his head with his disengaged hand and then offered Mrs. Silverbaum his other arm.

Rebecca murmured, "How soft the air; how bright the stars!"

"The stars are pointing out our future. Here we are, come in. They have the best ice-cream in town; oysters, anything you want."

"It is too warm for anything but ice-cream and pickles," said Rebecca.

"Be careful," returned her mother, "or you will take the cholera."

"Rebecca, for my sake, be careful."

"Never fear, Berkhoff. Here come the Hills and that inseparable Bennett. I wonder if he is engaged to that second Miss Hill. Going with her long enough, I should think. See, she is bowing to us. Make a nice bow, Berkhoff. You are a little awkward. I do believe that elder girl, Amelia, has never bowed or spoken a word to one of the Jews here," said Rebecca.

"She has to me," answered Berkhoff.

"In business, in the store, she speaks, no doubt, but I will warrant she never even comes into the store if she can avoid it. Socially she won't mix with us. Thinks us below her," continued Rebecca, eating pickles.

The Hills and Bennett sat at a different table right across from the Silverbaums and Berkhoff. They all ordered ice-cream. "I don't like sitting at this table where *those* people can stare me in the face," said Amelia.

"We could not help it, the other tables are filled," replied her father.

"Don't alarm yourself, Miss Amelia; '*those*' persons are very much interested in themselves. Berkhoff and Miss Silverbaum are engaged, you know, so they will look only at each other. Is that not so, Miss Alice?" said Bennett.

"Charlie," said Alice, by way of reply, "will you have a glass of ice water? It will cool you."

"I rather think it will. Look at that girl eating pickles. I am afraid she will die before she gets married. Now she is picking her teeth. Alice, look, I say."

"Mr. Bennett, you should set a better example than to be always talking about that odious girl," frigidly remarked Amelia.

Bennett colored, but exclaimed pleasantly, "Here comes a better subject, Mark Everard; I declare he is a fine specimen of a fellow," and he returned Everard's polite bow. "Ah, Alice, I see you return his bow nicely. Some one has politely finished his ice-cream and given him a seat."

"Charlie, I wish you would not talk so much

but eat, you will be weak," said Alice, banteringly. "I want to talk a little now. The Silverbaums are going. Berkhoff looks supremely happy. He has a good heart and deserves to have a good wife. I am afraid Miss Silverbaum will have things all her own way."

"Right, Alice, right; the young lady has decided ways and shows them too. Men are blind; there are two very nice girls who graduated the other day, why did he not take one of them?" said Mr. Hill.

"Why, papa, one is Grace Feld. She is one of the sweetest, softest and prettiest girls in town. To match her with Berkhoff!" exclaimed Alice, rather indignantly.

"He has money and is not that all such people want," remarked Mr. Hill.

"The girl appears gentle and well-mannered, an extraordinary thing for one of her kind," said Amelia.

"A pretty little thing," resumed Bennett in a low voice. "Don't be jealous, Alice. I shall give her a noble companion, grand and handsome Mark Anthony Everard. There, I have disposed of her to good advantage."

At that name Amelia looked in the direction of Everard, who sat with his face turned towards her, and she met his calm blue eyes fixed upon her. She immediately dropped her head and said, "Father, it is very warm in here for you. If you are all ready, let us go. *Those* people, I have no doubt, take good care of themselves."

Alice and Bennett went out first, selecting the principal street, which, though longer, was the

pleasanter route, but Amelia and her father took the shorter cut.

"Yes, I am not feeling well. Alice and Charlie can take care of themselves. Happy children!"

"Alice is very happy, father. Is it decided that she shall marry Charlie?"

"Well, the young fellow came to me and pleaded that I should take compassion on him. He said he was here without relatives, and if I only would give my consent that he might have Alice for a wife he was willing to wait, only for me to say 'yes.' He would have some one to work for, to live for and, if necessary, to die for. Alice would be his 'guiding star.' What could I do, but give him the wished-for answer, and so I did."

"You were right, father. He is good-natured, generous, and loves Alice devotedly."

"Yes, under all that current of gayety and humor there is a deep-rooted sentiment of honor and justice. He has a nice position with a chance of advancement, and Alice, with her cheerful temper and fine sense of discrimination, is just the kind of companion he requires."

"They are both young, and I pray God that they may have a long and happy future."

"Amen, my dear girl; but they are both young, as you say, and must wait. They both understand. Amelia, oh, I am faint."

"Dear father, lean on me a little. Why did we not go the other way?"

Amelia could not repress a cry as her father staggered against her and she would have fallen to the ground with her now helpless burden,

whose whole weight rested on her, had not a manly form with a strong arm rushed forward and supported him.

"Mr. Everard," said Amelia, in a despairing voice, immediately recognizing him, "tell me what to do?"

"Compose yourself, Miss Hill. I shall look out for your father. Run back, you are not far from the main street, and get a carriage. Pardon my sending you on this errand, but under the circumstances, I cannot help it."

Amelia was off in an instant and did not even hear the latter part of his sentence. Everard had followed the Hills out of the restaurant and, in a mechanical manner, with his mind wandering over the distant fields of the future, he followed in the footsteps of Amelia and her father. He saw Mr. Hill stagger, but as he was some yards in the rear, he could render assistance only at her first outcry.

In a short time the carriage came, bringing Amelia and Mr. Forester, an intimate friend whom she met. Mr. Hill, who was breathing heavily, was placed on one seat, and Mr. Forester and Amelia knelt by his side, carefully holding him. A messenger was immediately dispatched for their family physician, Dr. Wilson.

"Thanks, Mr. Everard," said Amelia, as the carriage drove off.

Everard lost no time in taking the other road and following Mr. Bennett and his fair companion, who were sauntering along, discussing their auspicious future. Everard called Mr. Bennett

aside and in a few words related to him the sad event.

"What a good, considerate fellow you are," whispered Bennett, pressing his hand.

"What pressing business that must be to make him come after you now, Charlie."

"I think, Alice, it is getting chilly."

"Why, Charlie, I am perspiring. Let me see, what was it you proposed when that Mr. Everard interrupted us?"

"Alice, dear," said Bennett, tenderly, "it strikes me that your father—my father, please God—did not look well this evening."

"For heaven's sake, Charlie, what do you mean? Is father ill? Did Mr. Everard bring any bad news?" eagerly, tremblingly, asked Alice.

"Yes, he said your father was not very well. Don't walk so fast, you will overheat yourself. You will be sick. I must take care of you. You are my darling, you know your dear father said so."

"Dear Charlie, come on. I seem not to be moving. Poor papa," said the girl, while her tears fell fast.

"He is not very ill, I hope. I suppose the heat has prostrated him. I thank God I have the right to come whenever I want and comfort you; don't you, Alice?"

"Yes, Charlie," answered Alice in a soft voice.

Bennett never ceased cheering her the entire way, urging her to be discreet and brave, and when she reached home Alice could not help murmuring a prayer of thanks to God for raising up

one who would henceforth soothe her troubles as well as share her joys.

"My dear Miss Alice," said Dr. Wilson, coming forward, "don't be alarmed. Your father has had a very, very slight attack of paralysis, but is already much better and breathing more easily. He requires absolute quiet for a few days, relaxation from his business for a few weeks, and he will then, I have no doubt, quite recover."

"Dear Amelia," said Alice to her sister—who clasped her in her arms—in the same low tone of voice that the doctor had spoken, "does father recognize you?"

"He opened his eyes once, gave my hand a feeble pressure, and closed them again. I am very hopeful though," replied Amelia, who had, externally at least, recovered her composure.

"Don't let the doctor go; make him stay all night," implored Alice.

"He shall remain."

"And so shall I," said Bennett.

"Charlie, it is not necessary," said Amelia, addressing him for the first time by his given name, but he insisted so firmly on his right of remaining to watch with the doctor that she knew it would be useless to remonstrate with him, and, appreciating his kindness, the two sisters respected his "right" with grateful looks.

On the following day, Mark Everard made inquiries regarding Mr. Hill, and left his card with the housemaid, requesting her not to disturb any one.

At the expiration of three weeks Mr. Hill was

so much improved that the physician allowed him to receive visitors.

"Dear Amelia," said her father, "I wish you would leave word with the maid when Mr. Everard comes again inquiring for my health to ask him up. I want to thank him for his kindness on the night of my attack and for the interest he has since manifested by calling daily."

"Yes, father."

"He has not called yet to-day, has he?"

"No, but this is his usual time, and I momentarily expect him. I shall ring and inform Eliza of your wish."

"Do so, then." Amelia complied with her father's request, and accordingly, when Everard came he was shown upstairs to see Mr. Hill. Amelia received him with easy, studied politeness.

"A thousand thanks, Mr. Everard, for your goodness. Why, bless me, I could scarcely wait until I had my physician's permission to see and thank you," said Mr. Hill.

"Pray be calm, Mr. Hill. My attention was nothing but common humanity that I should have shown a stranger, much less you, for whom I entertain the deepest respect."

Mr. Hill coughed, took out his handkerchief and slowly wiped the perspiration from his brow. Amelia turned her face toward the window for an instant, then made some observation relating to the weather.

"How is Nile's case getting along?" remarked Mr. Hill, after replacing his handkerchief.

"It has been postponed until the next term. It is too warm now," laughed Everard, "to do much

thinking. This weather renders one very indolent. Your illness came in an appropriate time."

"I believe it did," answered Mr. Hill. After some conversation about the impending election and various interesting local affairs, Everard rose to go.

"Come soon again, Mr. Everard, I shall always be delighted to see you," said Mr. Hill.

Amelia, who had refrained as much as possible from taking any part in the conversation, accompanied Everard to the door and said, "Allow me once more to thank you."

"Why make so much of nothing?" asked he, looking directly into her eyes.

Amelia averted her head and replied, "It is appreciated nevertheless."

He lingered a few moments at the door, but the expected and much longed for invitation to repeat his visit was not forthcoming from her lips.

CHAPTER X.

The school days of Grace had flitted by with usual alternations of smiles and tears. If, in the distance of after years, the very clouds of our life's spring seem beautiful, how gladly would we recall the bounding pulse and joy of the heart that then made it sunshine and flowers. How passing, alas! are the fairy-like visions of youth and how soon entombed beneath the hard realities of life's onward path.

"Henry," said Mrs. Feld to her husband, "I hope you have thought about what we were talking of the other day, to take Grace traveling."

"Yes, Ruth; you may get ready. We will go and soon too."

"I am so glad. I am sure it will do Grace good, she is so dreamy and not half so lively as Letitia."

Mrs. Feld was "glad" for more than one reason. She was anxious to remove her husband from the gaming table, to which he had now addicted himself with a passion so intense and absorbing as to stifle his former insatiable vice—drink.

"You think you will like it, Ruth?" asked Mr. Feld, throwing away the stump of a cigar.

"Of course I shall, and you, too, I am sure."

"Don't fear for me; I shall amuse myself," he answered, with a short laugh. "Good-bye."

"Where are you going?"

"To town, to be sure. It takes money to play grand lady, don't it? I must see to my business, so I am off."

"You here, dear mother, all alone? I thought father was here, too," said Grace, kissing her mother.

"He has just gone, dear; but think, child, we are to get ready to go traveling!"

"Oh, mother, I am overjoyed. It will be so nice for us all; we shall see so many different things, and you will be happy, too, won't you?"

"It makes me happy to see you so. If it were not that your Aunt Clara is not feeling well, I would ask your father to take Letitia along, but as it is, it is better for her to stay at home."

"What is that about me?" asked Letitia, walking into the room.

"Father has consented to take us traveling. Mother was just saying, if Aunt Clara were stronger, you, too, should come. I am so sorry," said Grace, putting her arms around her cousin.

A few tears, bitter as the waters of Marah, issued from Letitia's eyes, the involuntary overflow of the bitterness that oppressed her heart and welled forth in defiance of her will, which said, "Be still!"

"Don't cry, Letitia; poor mamma is sorry, but Aunt Clara, your mother——"

"I know she is not well and I would not leave her at present. Aunt Ruth, you are good, you are considerate." Letitia turned her head for a moment from the two women to conceal the look of anger and hate that flashed in her eyes. "Do not

mind my grief at the separation, it will pass away. I love you so very dearly, Grace, that if you only enjoy yourself I shall be content." No one could tell that the quick, ringing voice emanated from a heart burning with envy and yearning to shower a thousand invectives on Grace and fate.

"I know I shall feel miserable when I leave you and my dear friend, sweet Lizzie. How can I do without her?" and the tears of Grace fell fast.

"Now, it is all very well for you to have such great love for that girl at school, but as she is going to be a nun and you are soon to make your entrance into society, the best thing you can do is to forget her." Mrs. Feld said this as complacently as if affections were articles that could be picked up and thrown away at pleasure.

"However widely our paths diverge, mother, I shall never forget her. I shall feel her gentle influenza though she be far away."

"The novelty of traveling, new faces and different surroundings will soon put Lizzie Raynor out of your mind." In a measure the mother's predictions were correct.

When they were nearly ready to leave, friendship again asserted itself, and Grace went to the convent to bid her "friend Lizzie," now a novice, adieu.

"Dear, are you happy here?"

"Happy, dear Grace?" said she, embracing her affectionately, "supremely so."

"You look so. Your face is more spirituelle, your voice softer, you look heavenly."

"Not heavenly, dear, we must not look so high. I hope you will enjoy yourself on the trip."

"Not much doubt of that."

"I trust you will; but if ever, Grace," and the voice of the novice grew tremulous with emotion and prophetic in its earnestness, "you grow weary of the world and are deserted by friends, come here, and I shall show you the way to the 'peace beyond understanding.' Nothing to do but think of God and prepare young minds for the hereafter. By sowing well the seed, an abundant harvest can be reaped. I find it a perpetual spring of joy. But I see you look distressed."

"I cannot suppress my feelings," replied Grace. "Your words, comforting as they should be, make me shiver."

"You are in a flutter of wild excitement. You anticipate pleasure, which, heaven grant, you may find. Farewell, dear friend. Remember one who, morning and evening, raises for you her voice to the Redeemer, who alone can save." With a fervent pressure of the lips and of the hands, the two friends parted, the young woman to her duties and Grace as a debutante—she hoped to be—in the great whirlpool called society.

The convent gates had no sooner closed upon Grace than all painful and perplexing uncertainties fled. Youth, with its elasticity, is ready to turn the falling tear into one of joy. As snow melts before the genial rays of the sun, so does sorrow yield to the power of youth and strength. Youth, like a smiling oasis, reconcile us to the dreary deserts of life; through this we live in green fields and 'pastures new.' Age recalls the

THE IRRESISTIBLE CURRENT. 101

happy past, when we, too, went along singing songs and weaving garlands, cheered with sweet, roseate hopes for the future. This is the mirage that creates for us beautiful pictures enticing us onward, indeed, but when they seem to be nearest and most real, dissolving from our view.

When September came and Grace said "Good-bye," tears came into Letitia's eyes, genuine tears of sorrow, not at the departure of her relatives, but that she was forced to remain at home.

Mr. Feld took his family to Cairo by steamer in preference to rail. Though the Mississippi steamers are no longer the "floating palaces" of days gone by, but to Grace the steamer was "magnificent" and the scenery "fine." The little city with its levee to protect it from inundations and its Custom House of white stone was pronounced "elegant."

After remaining a day in Cairo they took the Illinois Central train to Chicago.

"How charming," said Grace, as the train rolled over the undulating meadows and level soil of Illinois. "What a luxuriant vegetation of wild flowers. Civilization has driven the buffalo from his home."

"Don't cry about it," spoke Mr. Feld, as her eyes turned humid. "Why, women and children are better than animals, I should think. Your heart is too soft, too soft."

"Father, you don't understand me. Of course animals with reason are better than those without," resumed Grace, endeavoring to make her father smile, "but everything driven away or hurt pains me. The poor Indians,"

"I see no Indians. That is enough now. You follow one thing too long; that's unhealthy."

"Wouldn't you like some of those flowers, Grace? How beautiful they are," said Mrs. Feld, trembling for her darling child.

"Mother, if the car could only stop for ten minutes, what myriads of specimens I should gather for my herbarium," replied Grace, pressing her mother's hand.

"Here we are at Chicago. Dreadful tired with that long ride. Glad we are settled in this nice hotel. This is comfort," said Mr. Feld, as he stretched himself at full length on the lounge in his luxurious quarters of the Auditorium-Annex.

"This must be a beautiful city and a great grain market, too," and Grace looked wise.

"Great!" returned her father. "What do you know? It is the greatest in the world. Many a fortune has been made and lost here. The people speculate in wheat as they do in mining stocks in San Francisco and in railroad stocks and all conceivable kinds of stocks in New York. These lakes and the energetic people have made Chicago."

"I do not know anything about stocks and such things, father."

"There, didn't I tell you, you don't know anything. Women never do; their brains are too weak for such matters," politely answered Mr. Feld. "Here, pet, don't look sad again, you know enough. We will drive through the parks to-morrow or the day after and on the Lake Shore road. Will that please you?"

"You are ever good and kind. Father, this

traveling makes you look ever so young, not that you ever look old, but as young as a man of twenty-five." Grace caressed and hung over him lovingly. "Do you know, there is a school here called the 'Dearborn Institute.' It has a great refracting telescope—then the Chicago University, and so many things; I should like to see them all."

"What a coaxing little thing you are. What do I know or care about telescopes, universities or art galleries."

"Father, you know I read a good deal about philosophical and astronomical instruments, and pictures and statues, but have seen little."

"Well, well, all right; but then we must go to the theater every night while we are here."

"That is just what I desire." Grace, who had never seen anything more than the performance of the country Thespians, was overcome with delight and lost herself in the illusions of the stage.

On walking home to the hotel one day Mr. Feld observed a man very adroitly putting his hand into the pocket of a lady who was walking in front of him by the side of a gentleman. To rush forward and give the fellow a blow was the work of a moment. The lady and gentleman turned round, and the former at once missed her portemonnaie. Mr. Feld, glancing at the prostrate fellow, saw the missing article on the pavement, picked it up and restored it to its owner. Taking in the situation at a glance, the lady and gentleman expressed their thanks, and all three hurried forward lest they should be detained by the police as witnesses against the pickpocket. Thus was formed an acquaintanceship, and on Mr. Feld

ascertaining that they were traveling for recreation to Niagara—the young man being a minister—his delight was great. Both parties agreed that union would be a mutual gain.

"Ruth," said Mr. Feld, "I thank the pickpocket for introducing me to such good and pleasant company as Montmartre and his sister are."

"They are very nice, I think," responded his wife.

"Miss Montmartre," added Grace, "says they are descended from an old Huguenot family, who fled from France immediately after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV."

When all were seated in the car bound for New York, Mr. Feld in a way placed his wife and daughter under Dr. Montmartre's care by saying: "I shall be mostly in the other car indulging in a smoke. Of course you don't smoke, but you can talk and explain these occasional 'little gems,' as Grace calls some very pretty scenes."

Dr. Montmartre looked at Grace, who always crimsoned at the least illusion to herself, and expressed more by his eyes than by his words the pleasure he would take in elucidating and interpreting nature for his fair companion. And another blush overspread the face of Grace before the first wave had entirely passed away.

Arriving in New York, Mr. Feld wished to stop at the St. Regis, but to accommodate the Montmartres, who did not wish to go to that pretentious caravansary, they went to another hotel, which, though not so grand, was still first-class.

As Grace expressed a desire to see the splendid stores of the great Metropolis, where the treasures of the East and West are gathered, Dr. Montmartre and his sister accompanied her and her mother—Feld generally disappeared after the morning meal only to return at dinner time.

Grace was astonished at the fine display of merchandise; all the beauty of her own fabrics vanished. As for the stores themselves, she did not dare compare them with the ones in that humble little town from whence she came. It took some time for our "Country Cousin" to select from the many "sweet things" exhibited for her benefit. All things were novel to her in this great city, but her naturally acute perceptions, sharpened by the delicate suggestions of Miss Montmartre, who had seen much of the world, made her quickly conform to the style and manners of those surrounding her, and soon bridged over all verdancy.

"Father," said Grace, as she returned from her first sight-seeing and shopping expedition, "how immensely rich the people must be here."

"You know nothing, child; there are men in Wall street who make and lose millions a day."

"According to that," resumed Grace, "what you possess is a mere nothing"

"All is nothing," said her mother. "What can buy life, health, happiness or heaven?"

The first Sunday after their arrival, Mrs. Feld proposed that she and Grace keep their Sabbath in the Temple Emanuel, Fifth Avenue, corner of Forty-third Street.

"Mrs. Feld," said Montmartre, "my sister and I should like to accompany you if you have no objection," and, of course, the Felds were delighted to have them.

"How happy I am that you are coming along. Would you believe it," said Grace, "I have never been in a synagogue! and I am quite eager to hear and see what is said and done there."

"Well, I have," replied Dr. Montmartre, "though my sister has not. I hear that the interior of this Temple is magnificent, decorated in the Oriental style and finished in a superb manner."

The synagogue was found to be as grand as he described it. As the organ spoke in its solemn, deep-stirring tone and the artistic voices of the choir accompanied it in the Yigdal and other holy songs, Grace felt her soul lifted up, and could have wept for her deep emotions. The next day being Sunday, mother and daughter accompanied brother and sister to the Unitarian church—the church to which the two latter belonged. It was a handsome building of red brick and cream-colored stone, with beautiful, variegated marble columns. The liberal views of the minister expressed in his sermon pleased them well, and when the choir sang "I know that my Redeemer liveth," with the deep, swelling, reverberating notes of the organ, again the tear trembled in the eye of Grace.

On the following Sunday they visited St. Patrick's Cathedral, where Grace was also visibly affected by the solemn services. She was one of those emotional beings, who are carried along

with each passing sentiment, one replacing the other in rapid succession, the last impression being generally the strongest.

"So we are to visit to-day Cooper's Institute, the Normal College and the Libraries. I am anxious to see the building which is a glorious monument to the philanthropy of Peter Cooper. We must hurry and go early if we wish to accomplish anything. Are you ready, Grace?" said Laura Montmartre's voice.

Grace, with light gray poplin dress, a blue ribbon knotted around her throat and the daintiest little hat in the world, from which strayed loose tendrils of golden hair, was a lovely vision. Dr. Montmartre thought so, too, as he looked up from some engravings on the reception room table which he had been carelessly viewing.

Dr. Arthur Montmartre, over six feet tall, had fine, clear, gray eyes, a broad and intellectual forehead and heavy, chestnut hair, perfectly straight around his head. His forty-five years and his great self-control gave him, he thought, all the armor he needed, yet an undefinable something passed over him as he looked at Grace standing there. A light of pleasure shone from his eye so perceptibly, that she faltered and trembled like a bird on a branch ready for flight.

"In a moment. We can start as soon as mamma is ready," responded Grace, looking down on the carpet and vainly essaying to fasten her gloves.

"Allow me," said Dr. Montmartre, as he deliberately took the buttoner from Grace and accomplished the troublesome task.

Mrs. Feld, coming in, gave one swift, uneasy glance at the two, then turned and quietly said to Laura, "I am sorry I kept you waiting, but I will no longer. Come, let us go," and this day, with many others, was devoted to "sight-seeing."

But from all this coming and going Mr. Feld held himself aloof. Mrs. Feld had done all she could to induce him to join them, but in vain. Grace, in the excitement and whirl of pleasure, had not reflected much on her father's absence from these excursions. In fact, she was unconsciously nurturing an all absorbing interest in another, which made her for the time forgetful of everything. Such selfishness does the germination of the tender chord produce even in the best.

"Dear mamma, Dr. Montmartre and Laura say it is time for us to be off for Niagara, so please ask papa if we can start to-morrow. I am so glad we have fallen in with them. Laura is so amiable and sympathetic. Thinks about everything and loves the whole world," to which observation Mrs. Feld assented with an affirmative nod.

"She must be thirty," continued Grace, "and though her features are not regular, I can't see anything that I should like to have altered about them. As for Dr. Montmartre, he seems a Solomon, who knows everything 'from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon to the Hyssop that springeth out of the wall.' Both are invaluable companions. But what about Niagara? I do so hope we can go when they wish it."

"I shall ask your father this evening, and

think we can go; for I wish to leave here too," observed Mrs. Feld, with a slightly quavering voice.

"What a dear mother you are," replied Grace, kissing her affectionately as she left the room.

No sooner had the door closed upon her child's retreating form than Mrs. Feld put her hands to her head and commenced crying bitterly, saying: "Yes, I want to leave here. Why did I ever leave home? Henry is drawn on here like the moth to the candle. I must mask my feelings before this little world of people. Henry's associates have the same right to this hotel as I have, and they seem to smile at me mockingly. And Grace's companions—Oh! I wish I was home again."

"Well, mamma," said Grace, on the following morning, "what answer did papa give?"

"We are to go."

"You are ever loving and kind, but I shall try and repay all by filial obedience. I am so very glad. You look pale and worn to-day. Does papa—" she could proceed no further; the words refused to come at her bidding. Her heart was touched with remorse at being so engrossed in her own pleasures as not to observe and share her mother's troubles.

Mrs. Feld was too considerate a wife to wish to expose her husband's faults more than was actually necessary, so she quickly changed the subject. Grace was too wise to harp on a topic which she knew was giving pain.

"My dear child, what do you think of Mr.

Lavalle, whom your father introduced to our circle at dinner yesterday?"

"He looks very distingué."

"He is very rich and has traveled all over the world. You like that, I know. He is of our religion, and is every way a man to be encouraged in respectable families."

"I like to hear and read travelers' interesting narratives. I should like to go myself to Canton, where the poor eat rats, 'prepared by skinning, flattening and drying;' to the jungles of India, where the tiger and lion roam, where one must feel impressed by the silent grandeur of the forests and mountains; see the Sheiks of Arabia, the Effendis and Pashas of Turkey, where one is treated so hospitably, and when seated on a divan is presented with the customary chibouque with a golden saucer underneath the bowl of the pipe by an attendant, who gracefully drops on one knee. Go to Jerusalem and visit the four holy cities, Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias and Hebron; go to the Dead Sea, and, though I can neither analyze its waters nor ascertain its specific gravity, yet could take a sail on its deep, sullen bosom, provided I could obtain an iron boat."

"There, Grace, stop to breathe. Mr. Lavalle can gratify you in all these things. Come, dear, be a little on the lookout, won't you?"

"These things are very well in their way. If some one can give me all I want, with other good qualities to recommend him, he may make an impression upon me, but if not, I say 'no,'" added Grace, looking up archly and laughing.

CHAPTER XI.

"When we come back from Niagara we must make an ascent of the tall, blue Catskill mountains," was Montmartre's proposition to Mrs. Feld.

"Indeed—I am speaking for my family—we will not. No going up mountains for me." Mrs. Feld secretly hoped that he would be anxious to go and they would part company.

"If you all won't go, of course, my sister and I shall not. I thought as we cannot see the snow-clad Sierras, we should see the Catskill; but as you like," and Dr. Montmartre consoled himself with the delightful prospect of many dangerous places at Niagara where he could give assistance to Grace.

"I have changed my mind," said Mr. Feld, coming. "I am going first to Saratoga. Come along, Montmartre."

"But the tickets?"

"Never mind; I will attend to that part of the business."

"You said we were to go to the Falls," said Mrs. Feld; "let us go."

"But *I* don't want to go, and that's the end of it."

"Please your wife, Mr. Feld. Come, do; I, too, should like to go to Niagara."

There is no telling what reply Mr. Feld would have made, but when Mrs. Feld saw that Dr. Montmartre, too, preferred to go to Niagara, she quickly said: "It is no difference to me, Henry. Do as you please."

"To Saratoga, by all means," said Mr. Feld.

Mrs. Feld was disappointed; for Dr. Montmartre submitted to the dictum of Grace's father.

Mr. Feld was in a feverish haste to reach Saratoga. He had no sooner arrived there, than he plunged into every excess. In this vortex of wealth and fashion Grace would have felt quite alone, had it not been for her companions, who had mingled much in the world. The Montmartres possessed the art of winning all hearts, and prepared the way for their more timid companion. And one of these companions seemed to Grace to be a thesaurus of everything that was wonderful and good and wise. If accompanied by Dr. Montmartre, she would have found the same attraction in the desert of Arizona or Sahara as in Saratoga.

"I declare, Henry," said Mrs. Feld, as her husband leisurely sauntered into the room, "I wish we were home again. I feel so lonely here. I am afraid that Grace does not enjoy herself too well!" She was really anxious, heartsick to get away and be at home again. Temptations beset her husband, and he rushed madly into the eddying maelstrom. She also dreaded the fascinations of that intelligent, amiable, gentlemanly Christian. Had he been an indifferent person or of ordinary mold, she would not have been appre-

hensive of the result; but this man was one of Grace's ideal heroes.

"Well, my dear wife, as far as regards Grace, I don't think she could be better amused than here. Her eyes are never swimming in tears now; on the contrary, they are always laughing with pleasure. So you do not see straight."

"It is also too fashionable for me here. It appears as if the ladies brought a jeweler's shop with them. Such quantities of diamonds and pearls as are displayed in these grand parlors! When Grace had on at home her little sunburst of diamonds, I thought it made her look beautiful; here no one notices it, but with contempt. Laura's diamonds are very handsome. She is not wealthy, but the jewels are heirlooms from noble ancestors."

"Oh, you women! I never knew she had diamonds."

Mrs. Feld wished to remark that he took little note of what should interest him, but wisely concluded not to reproach him when he was with her.

"The Montmartres are very nice people, let me tell you. Glad we dropped in with them; relieve me ever so much," added Mr. Feld, with visible satisfaction.

"I am sure I wish we had not met them," responded Mrs. Feld, slowly. "I should be much better satisfied if Dr. Montmartre was less with our Grace. Do you know he is a Unitarian?"

"Well, what of it? For my part, Deist, Atheist, Pantheist or Fetichist, as long as he leaves me alone. The Unitarians are the most liberal

Christians, denying the Trinity, I believe. You see I am growing old and don't want the trouble of always dangling after young girls," and Mr. Feld, with his customary vanity, looked in the opposite mirror for a refutation of the assertion.

"I feel frightened about Grace and Dr. Montmartre."

"Believe me, Ruth, he regards Grace as a friend, and has as little desire to mix blood with the Jew as the Jew with him. Have no fear."

A few days after this conversation, Grace came into her mother's room with a letter in her hand, exclaiming, "A letter from Letitia. Aunt is entirely well, and Uncle took Letitia to St. Louis 'to gratify his darling child,' as she says."

"Well, I am glad everything is smiling there. Here is your father."

"Why, papa, what have you there?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No; you know I was always slow at such work."

"Look, both of you," and Mr. Feld quickly unclasped two morocco cases and revealed to their admiring eyes what lay therein. In one case, on a blue velvet bed, lay a brooch, earrings and necklace of pearls, and in the other, on a rosy bed, a set of diamonds, which fairly dazzled them with their brilliancy.

"The pearls are for you, my dear Grace, which, being white and soft looking, suit well your fair complexion. The diamonds are for you, Ruth, my dark beauty; they shine so, and will light up your face."

Grace threw her arms around her father's

neck, kissing his forehead, eyes and lips, declaring: "You are the very best father in the world. You are too good."

Mrs. Feld, though delighted, could not help exhibiting vexation at this extravagance, and remarked, "At this rate you are fast going to ruin."

"Well, if I do," replied he doggedly, "you go a long way to help me. Who saw the jewels on the other women? Is it not women who coolly examine and dissect one another from head to foot?"

"I am sure, mamma, dear papa was anxious to please. I hope he has not been too generous."

"Of course it was to please your mother. As soon as I heard her mention that both of you had no pretty ornaments, I sent an order to a house in New York. Think of my luck! Lavalley is intimate with the proprietor and brought the jewels here himself. He was coming, he said, and was happy to do me a favor. And you, Ruth, angry for my kindness! Fine thanks."

"Take us home," said Mrs. Feld, who, feeling she was in dangerous waters, knew no longer how to steer, and was anxious for the shore.

"Do take us home," added Grace, imploringly, while tears gathered in her eyes.

"Why, what is the matter with you? You are actually trembling," and her father patted her face.

"Go home and leave Lavalley here! That would not do. I believe he just came because you are here, for he did not know how to show his kindness when he brought the cases. And the

way he looked at me, Grace, that was for you, too."

"Oh, papa, what nonsense. The man doesn't think of me, I am sure."

"Yes, he does, Grace. Let me tell you he is a very nice man, young, good-looking, heaps of money; what more can you want? A splendid life-companion. Better for you than Montmartre, my dear, who is really an excellent, capital fellow, but religion, child, religion."

Mrs. Feld grew pale; probably her husband by his words might have warmed the phantom into life. "That man," said she to herself, "never does understand anything; he makes the most fearful blunders."

Grace, at first attracted by Dr. Montmartre's great conversational powers and vast knowledge on all subjects, gradually found herself longing for his presence; then, being constantly in his society, he had made deep inroads into her heart. She was restless and unhappy the moment he left her.

Though Arthur Montmartre had never allowed a word of love to escape his lips, his "actions spoke louder than words." Everything he did for her said, "I love you." Intuitively, they were both mutually sensible of a reciprocated love. Young as Grace was, she repeatedly asked herself:

"What will become of this love, which I dare not reveal? The knowledge of it will render my parents miserable, especially my mother. She will condemn me without mercy."

Grace passed day after day in a kind of hopeless joy. She clung to the moments as they flew swiftly by, hoping and praying that the problem would be solved. When her mother said, "Let us go home," she echoed the cry with a despairing heart. She perceived that she was losing strength in this silent struggle, and thought her only safety lay in flight. Once again in her old home, she could, if she chose, nourish the passion, live on it, and if she must, "Die with it."

Previously, Mrs. Feld was too wise to say anything disparagingly of the Montmartres, for fear of arousing a slumbering passion, but now she was continually saying: "How tired I am of this place and these traveling companions. It is really the queerest thing in the world that a little incident about a pickpocket should make us such good friends! I should think, not being too rich, their traveling desires would be satisfied by this time. It is boldness for persons to think, if they were once welcome, that they will always be so. Why did they not leave us and see those mountains or Niagara, when they wanted to go?"

Grace would answer in the most touching tone: "Mother, how can you talk so? Better, nicer people never breathed than Arthur and Laura Montmartre. I should not have enjoyed myself without them, and *he* knows everything."

"And so does Laval, my dear," said her mother, when she had heard the last words for the tenth time. "You do not know how nice he is. Let me put you in the right path. Montmartre is noble, but, Grace, you know you must not, cannot—" and they both cried heartily.

If Lavallo were with Grace to the temporary exclusion of the minister, who chafed and fretted, Mrs. Feld's fears would vanish. Then she would go to Arthur and be doubly kind to him, as if he did not understand her kindness and her manoeuvring!

It was the beginning of October when the party arrived at Niagara Falls. The days were warm, but the evenings quite cool. The surrounding scenery, though now lacking the full dress of summer, was clothed in gorgeous autumnal tints, beautiful as well as grand. A friendly breeze wafted to the travelers' rooms the dying perfume of the herbs and wild flowers, which grow even in the crevices of the rocks and overhang banks and cliffs.

Mr. Lavallo had now attached himself to the party, and Montmartre reproached himself for not having taken advantage of his former opportunities to woo and win Grace.

"Step in, Laura," said Montmartre, after he handed Mrs. Feld and Grace in the conveyance. "I think we shall have a fine time to-day." He followed them and was just closing the door when he heard rapid footsteps.

"Hey, Montmartre, room for me?"

"I suppose so."

"Where are you going?"

"To Whirlpool Rapids."

"I am afraid I shall incommode you, ladies, though this old vehicle seems large enough to accommodate six. Deuced glad I am not too late. Here goes this good Havana," said Lavallo,

throwing away a cigar, "a sacrifice to the ladies. Ye Gods! they are worth all sacrifices."

Not a muscle of Montmartre's face quivered, nor did his manners manifest his feelings of displeasure, but mentally he exclaimed, "There is no evading that sleuth hound."

"Let me assist you," said Montmartre, when they arrived at their destination and Grace attempted to alight. "We are now at the rapids, where the Lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, St. Clair and Erie discharge their volumes of water."

"The noise of this cataract, so sullen and deafening in its roar, sounds like rolling thunder, and causes the earth around to tremble. See that cloud on the hills and valleys," said Grace.

"That comes," replied Montmartre, "from a thick vapor which arises from the immense quantity of water constantly pouring down."

"The Lord of nature is nowhere more manifest than in this wild, awe-inspiring display," said Lavallo.

"Yes," responded Montmartre, "but notwithstanding the variety, immensity and grandeur of God's works, man, small as he is, feels that in possessing a soul and mind he stands at the head of all creation. 'All men conceive by the name of God, implying eternity, incomprehensibility and omnipotency. And thus all that will consider may know that God is, though not what He is; even a man born blind, though it be not possible for him to have any kind of imagination what kind of thing fire is, yet he cannot but know that something there is that man calls fire, because it

warmeth him.' " Montmartre and Lavalley involuntarily took their hats off.

"These rocks," continued Montmartre, "teach that the world must have an age to which six thousand years is a mere trifle; for, according to geology, ages were needed to cut out these cliffs, smooth and polish the rocks, and to form the terraces of these wonderful Falls. It has been said that the Falls were once seven miles farther North, and that they do not remain stationary."

"That is a question," said Lavalley.

"Well, Lyell, in his description of the Falls, said: 'Mr. Bakewell calculated that, in the forty years preceding 1830, the Niagara had been going at the rate of about a yard annually, but I conceive that one foot a year would be a much more probable conjecture; in which case 35,000 years would have been required for the retreat of the Falls from the escarpment of Queenstown to their present site, if we could assume that the retrograde movement had been uniform throughout.'"

"But, omitting geological considerations, though we need not believe in evolution," returned Lavalley, "still we need not believe that God created man and woman, as stated in the Bible."

"The Bible contains some unquestionable truths."

"Yes, so it does; for instance, the ten commandments are unquestionable because they are suitable for all epochs, nations and races. A God is needed as a cause for the innumerable and inimitable works we see around us. Cicero wisely asks, when writing of 'the splendor and beauty

of the sky; the changes of days and seasons; the measured revolutions of the sun; the waxing and waning of the moon; the courses of the planets; the earth with its variety of climates, when we see all these and numberless other like things, can we doubt whether there is a Maker and Governor of the Universe?"

"I am of the opinion that all religions, based on the ten commandments, have a strong foundation. They are the fundamental principles of everything that is good, the essence of all religion. But how about the many ceremonies attached to your religion?" inquired Montmartre.

"Certain rules were prescribed in the Bible for sanitary reasons, some to procure good autonomy and bring the people to light and civilization. As for ceremonies, they are, as a Jewish divine has said, 'only the garments and not the flesh.' As the world progresses many ceremonies are dispensed with. No religion has ever lost anything by dropping certain appendages which are only shackles. A religion which retains the ten commandments will never perish."

"Mr. Laval, I am delighted to hear you take such a liberal view of the tenets of your faith; my own also gives me a broad scope for freedom of thought. When I go home to my own dear theological pursuits, whatever is for the good and enlightenment of humanity that shall I add to my creed. Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for the innumerable benefits which Thou hast conferred on me and mine. May my humble efforts be crowned with success," and the divine, in a moment of spontaneous and grateful effusion to

God, raised his fine gray eyes, filled with enthusiasm, toward heaven.

Grace thought he looked immeasurably grand, and involuntarily drew a step nearer towards him.

When Montmartre first spoke, Lavalley felt a slight attraction towards him, but when he turned his words into a half prayer, the movement of Grace was not unperceived by him, and he averted his head with a darkened look, mentally exclaiming: "All ministers are canting hypocrites. I detest them. Miss Feld," he said aloud, going near her, "look down at the breakers."

"I cannot look down upon the maddening whirl of waters. The noise alone frightens me."

"Why should you fear when I am here," said Lavalley in a low voice.

"Presumptuous man," said Dr. Montmartre aside, whose jealous ear caught the whispered words, "it is the arrogance of Cæsar to the boatmen. Shall it be 'Veni, Vidi, Vici'? I must see to it."

"Come," spoke Laura, "let us all take a drive over the bridge to the plateau on the Canadian side."

"Yes," said Grace and her mother simultaneously.

"If the ladies desire it, we go of course. Don't we, Dr. Montmartre?" and Lavalley laughingly gave his arm to Grace.

Montmartre, though provoked almost beyond endurance, offered his arm to Mrs. Feld and his sister. He talked, laughed and jested until they

arrived at the plateau, where they had an excellent view.

"See," said Lavalley, as they looked at the waterfall, "how it shifts, glides and rolls along."

"It reminds me," added Dr. Montmartre, "of Mrs. Sigourney's beautiful tribute to Niagara:

"Flow on forever, in thy glorious robe
Of terror and of beauty, yea, flow on
Unfathomed and resistless. God hath set
His rainbow on thy forehead, and the cloud
Mantled around thy feet. And He doth give
Thy voice of thunder power to speak of Him
Eternally—bidding the lips of man
Keep silence, and upon thy altar pour
Incense of awe-struck praise.

Thou dost speak
Alone of God, who poured thee as a drop
From his right hand—bidding the soul that looks
Upon thy fearful majesty be still,
Be humbly wrapped in its own nothingness,
And lose itself in him.' "

"Those lines are sublime," said Grace, "and your voice sounds so——"

"Grace!" screamed her mother, catching her by the arm.

"For heaven's sake, what is the matter, mother? You frightened me nearly to death."

"So you did me. You careless girl, I thought you were falling over. It is time to start for home. You have made me nervous."

Laura looked down; Dr. Montmartre turned slightly pale. Lavalley smiled, and the party

started homeward, omitting that talk of the fear that as the Falls are now used as a motor power, time might rob Niagara of its terror and beauty.

A few days after this little fright of Mrs. Feld they again went to the Whirlpool Rapids. Here Grace and Arthur found themselves a little separated from their party. This great pleasure and opportunity, of which Montmartre immediately took advantage, he rightly attributed to the skillful manœuvring of his sister Laura.

"Dear Grace, I have longed, I have prayed for this moment," and looking into the eddying, seething mass below, he continued, "yet know not how to proceed. A story of which I read when quite young comes to my mind, which, if you are willing, I shall relate to you."

"Certainly, certainly," responded Grace, nervously.

"There was an Indian sleeping in his canoe on the Lake. He was not far from the Falls, but the canoe was fastened and he felt safe. But by and by, the string was loosed by some accident, and the canoe floated out upon the water. It went silently along, and the Indian still continued to sleep. Soon the current began to take the boat towards the Falls. It went more and more rapidly, and soon was near the cataract. At this moment the Indian awoke; he saw his situation and knew that it was vain to struggle against his fate. He therefore seated himself erect, wrapped his blanket close around his body and, folding his arms, went down with the thundering tide. I feel," said he, taking her hands, which had grown cold during this recital, and which she irresist-

ingly allowed him to hold, "that I can no longer struggle against my heart's passion, and, like the Indian, will submit to my fate. Grace, let it be what it will, if only with you."

"Grace!" shrieked her mother, coming up rapidly with Lavalley; Laura lingering in the background. Grace did not hear her mother's call; the roaring of the cataract and her absorption in Dr. Montmartre's conversation prevented her.

"Grace," and her mother gave her a gentle tap on the shoulder, "are you deaf?"

The words of Montmartre had not been heard by Mrs. Feld, but she caught sight of the clasping of hands, and conjectured that she was in time to thwart a tender declaration. The story of the Indian, combined with Montmartre's avowal of love and her mother's arrival, overcame Grace. Her agitation was so plainly visible that her mother was convinced of that which she had but surmised the moment before.

"See, Arthur," said Laura considerably, "if you do not think this shell which I just found to belong to the univalves. You have studied conchology and should know."

"Yes," returned he upon examination, "you are correct. I believe that study is a favorite one of yours too. Here, Mr. Lavalley, look at it, maybe you also take an interest in malacology."

"Certainly I do," rejoined Lavalley, who was a prudent, consummate man of the world, and perfectly understood the adroit proceeding. "It is beautiful. This part looks like the lobe of a lady's ear. See, Miss Feld."

"It is lovely. I want to get a collection of

pretty shells," said Grace, who had by this time partially regained her self-possession. Thus even the little shell served a purpose by relieving an embarrassment, which would otherwise have been extreme.

CHAPTER XII.

When the party returned to the hotel, Grace, exhausted with a hundred conflicting emotions, immediately returned to her room. She was followed by her mother, who ignored the scene at the Rapids.

"My darling," exclaimed Mrs. Feld, fondly, with a happy smile and proud look, "I am the bearer of pleasant news for you. I bring it to you with a joyous heart, hoping that you will be as happy as I am."

"To be sure, I am happy when my dear mother is. Tell me what it is quickly." Her heart palpitated wildly, for she dreaded to think in what direction her mother's suggestive words were drifting.

"You know, dear," said Mrs. Feld, tenderly, "your good and happiness have been the aim of my life. When once I see you not only comfortably but richly provided for, what more can I want? Grace, dear, the clouds are gathering, the storm may burst sooner than you or I think."

"Mother, storms?"

"Yes, child, storms. Alone, I can stand anything and everything, but for you to be caught in the pitiless rain, my child," (with choking voice) "I could not stand it. It would break my heart. My young life passed away in poverty,

but you, who have been accustomed to plenty, know nothing of its bitter, biting touch. I pray God you never may. We have been rich, and maybe so now, but your father, at his present rate of acting, can drain a gold mine. I wish you could be in a place of shelter and security before the storm comes, then the Lord's will be done. You hear, child?"

"What does all this mean?"

"I tell you all this, so that you may put proper value on the offer and the reason which makes me beg you to accept the honor of Mr. Lavalle's hand."

"He wishes to marry *me*!"

"Yes; isn't that pleasant to think of?"

Grace had had no time to reflect upon what Dr. Montmartre had said to her. She shuddered as there loomed up before her a sea, which divided them, and that was the sea of religion.

Lavalle saw the waters between them, but knew that love had surmounted greater barriers than these, though it presented so formidable a front; therefore he made haste to press the question, for fear of losing the coveted prize.

Poor, timid Grace scarcely knew what to do, but love gave her the courage to answer, "No, mamma, I would rather think of staying with you."

"Think well, dear child, of all I told you. Lavalle loves you."

"If he loves me, why not propose himself? It seems more noble than to have it done by proxy."

"As for that," replied her mother promptly,

"he only asked me leave to sue for your hand and heart. Words will not fail him when he tells you of his love."

"It is too sudden. I am entirely too young to think of marriage."

"I know you are very young, Grace. I told him that your age did not yet fit you to bear the cares of married life. He is willing to wait six months. Yes, ready to serve, as he says, 'like Jacob for Rachel.' Only be engaged to him, dear; he will do anything and everything."

"He would soon want to curtail the time, I know, and, besides, I do not love him!"

"Dear child, that is not necessary. He loves you, and you will soon learn to love him. Don't turn from a loving heart; give him a favorable answer. I expect him here soon."

"Oh, dear, what shall I do? I have never thought of him in the light of a lover," added Grace innocently.

"To be sure not. You had your thoughts fixed on Arthur Montmartre. Fool that I was to allow him to come with us, as if I encouraged such a thing! If your father had been like another man, this would never have happened. But Montmartre should be ashamed to take advantage of your youth," said Mrs. Feld, angrily.

"Anything but that," answered Grace, resolutely. "You do him great injustice, mother, to accuse him of such a thing. Until this morning a word of love never escaped his lips—and then he did not say much, for you came and called me."

"Oh, no, he is very noble. He only took the first chance he could get to tell you of his love. He should know his love is objectionable to your parents and yourself, too—at least, it should be."

"Not to me," and Grace blushed deeply. "I am afraid I am more reprehensible than Arthur is. I think he could read the love of my heart in my tell-tale eyes," her courage rising as she defended the honor of her lover.

"You are a bold girl and a disobedient one, too, to go contrary to your parents' wishes. If, as you say, you are 'too young' to think of marriage, how should you know whom to love? Your heart must be a sensitive plate to fall in love with the first young man you meet. I wish you to rub off everything that was on it before and write the name I tell you, now and forever," said Mrs. Feld in a stern, deep voice.

"I would rather not marry at all. If the storm come which you so much dread on my account, you will find me at your side, a good and loving daughter. Do not fear for me."

"It is no use to plead, my child. I must cut deep into this wound if I am to cure it. Put away this foolish love. However good Arthur Montmartre may be, he can never be your husband, and remember your poor mother," added Mrs. Feld, deluging Grace with kisses before she left the room.

Grace was in despair. What should she do; marry Lavalle, to whom she was indifferent, or her beloved Arthur, whom she thought she loved so passionately, so devoutly? This love took

every moment a stronger root from the opposition it met. A wild thought invaded her brain, to which she clung for hope as tenaciously as the tempest-tossed mariner to the plank of a wreck.

"I am sure if Arthur had the opportunity," she mentally said, "he would finish the proposal of marriage so suddenly interrupted, and then for my heaven-born idea."

Wearied with conflicting emotions of hope and despondency, Grace offered a silent prayer to God, put on her hat and passed quietly out of the hotel for a little stroll. She was not accustomed to take walks without her mother's permission; this action was partly mechanical, partly impulsive. A few dark clouds loomed upon the horizon, assuming weird, fantastic shapes.

Grace had proceeded only a few yards when the object of her thoughts quietly joined her.

"I knew that you would come, my darling; that your soul, in its sympathy with mine, would long for an interchange of thought. But what is the matter? You appear suffering."

The face of Grace gave indications of the inward struggle, but no answer came from her pallid lips.

"I am here," continued Montmartre, as he gazed at her lovingly, "to hear my fate from your sweet mouth. I do not even protest how ardently, madly I love you, because I think and hope it has been so apparent in every word and deed that you must know its intensity. Come, I wait your answer in unendurable suspense and torture. I have your love, have I not?" and he looked steadfastly into her eyes, which drooped

under his longing, penetrating, all absorbing look.

"Pray do not look at me in that way," cried Grace. "I cannot stand it."

"Tell me instantly, then, if you will be mine to love, protect and cherish as the choicest blessing of heaven? for love me you do," said he, vehemently.

"I do love you," she murmured, in a voice so subdued and low that only the winds and her lover could catch the sounds. At these words of affirmation he would have clasped her to his heart, but a gentle wave of her hand was sufficient to check any outburst of feeling.

"I can be your wife only on one condition," replied Grace, eagerly and with bated breath.

When the first consciousness of love for the young Jewess dawned upon Montmartre's mind, Religion thrust herself forward with warning finger and said, "Beware, do not come near 'forbidden fruit.'" He had so much confidence that his judgment would not allow him to be carried away by his passions and that he could restrain them with the command, "Thus far shall ye go and no farther," that he gave no heed to the timely admonition. But he had not studied love, with its profound, inexplicable subtleties.

"Dear heart, love is a tide which overwhelms everything, and which will no more obey orders than did the tide the royal mandate of Canute. I shall concede you not one condition, but ten thousand. You are mine, then." Again Montmartre wished to embrace her, and once more a motion of her hand was sufficient to restrain him.

"Take care," answered Grace, looking tenderly into his eyes and putting her little hands on his, "it may be a hard agreement to sign, but my life of love and devotion will prove to you how I appreciate your offering at the shrine of love."

Still the mist was not clear from Montmartre's eyes. "Proceed then," and he spoke with nervous impatience, "that I may the sooner comply with your request."

"I shall tell you, but if you regret it afterwards, I shall release you from your promise. Only say that you will not do it because of the promise you gave me."

"Very well, only let me hear the momentous stipulation."

"Become a Jew," said Grace in three words and in a clear and distinct voice.

"A Jew!"

"Yes. I am averse to proselytism, yet I want to convert you. I know you are almost inflexible, but your warm love should prevail."

"No, Grace; that cannot be."

"Then you do not love me."

"Is that a test? I will put you in the same crucible then."

"I cannot. It would kill my mother. If I take a stiletto and stab her to the heart death would not be more certain."

"You are not like Hinda of Moore's 'Fire-Worshippers,' who says to Gheber Hafed:

"Together kneeling, night and day;
Thou for my sake, at Allah's shrine,
And I—at any God's for thine!"

"Oh, Grace, Grace, can you answer me?"

"It is I who await *your* answer. What do you say?"

"Never," answered Montmartre solemnly. Grace drew coldly away and stood erect before him, but in a moment she drooped like a blighted lily.

"Here, Grace, is a knoll of rocks. Sit down and let us talk over this subject. Now," said he, placing himself beside her, "I hope you will forgive me for shocking your tenderness by that stern word, 'never.' Both of us worship one undivided, inseparable God. Neither acknowledges Jesus as Divine; but my religion places him above all mortals. In a main point our religions resemble, viz., in the worship of one God. I am trying to cast out of my mind all superstition, all prejudice, all illiberality, and implant in my heart a desire to love all human kind as brothers and sisters—we are all from one Father—the consequent deduction is that from such teachings will spring a religion pure and good."

"Do you believe in Sabbath worship?"

"Yes; the observance of some day is absolutely necessary."

"Where should we pray?"

"Dear Grace, though the worship of God under the starry dome of heaven is as acceptable to Him as under the ceiling of a church or synagogue, yet, the consecration of a building to that one purpose assists in exalting the mind above material things."

"Why not, why not, worship with me?" said Grace, pleadingly.

"Our yearnings may be the same, dear Grace, but to enter a new church, take up new ceremonies, come under a new hierarchy, I cannot. Even my great love for you cannot make me do that. Why not be satisfied to marry me, if I allow you to observe all the rites of your religion?"

"My conscience might be satisfied," responded Grace, sadly, with tearful eyes, "but my parents, never. They would disinherit me, mourn for me as for the dead."

"I dare not ask you to break the fifth commandment, but shall try and encourage you to bear your lot cheerfully, which I can scarcely do myself," and he averted his head that Grace might not see the mighty struggle love was making to overcome his resolutions. When he turned his face towards her again, his look was sad, but composed.

"I trust that something will turn up so that we can be united. At present all appears dark."

"As I know you love me, I cannot give you up," said Grace impetuously, and blushing violently. "You are my sun, and when you are gone there will be nothing for me but night."

"Grace, you stir me to the depths of my heart. My love is greater than you know. If God has ordained that we must part, our souls, though afar, will be one; for never will these lips of mine speak love to another woman. You are very young and may learn to love another, but I, although in the prime of manhood, have passed those halcyon days when man's heart is inflamed with every handsome face and graceful form. But you! It is hard to think other arms will en-

fold you, another walk with you to the dark waters—Oh, it is bitter, bitter!”

“Alas! I am already told to love another, as if love were a football to toss, at command, from one to another, and not something which concerns the happiness of one’s life.”

“Lavallo?” said Dr. Montmartre, in a scarcely audible voice.

“Yes, it is he.”

“Religion, the consoler of man, has stepped in and robbed me of my heart’s delight.”

“Beware,” returned Grace, “do not blaspheme. Religion is always a support in our weakest and darkest hours.” The evidence of despondency on his part rendered her more resolute and courageous.

“True religion, consisting in the worship of God, with a heart full of charity and love for every one, elevates man to the highest standard of earthly perfection. Ceremonies are but fetters, binding us to the narrow and petty. Now, for cold forms of religion, you must tear this love out of your heart and immolate it for another.”

“Never shall I consent that another take your place in my heart. Though I cannot marry you, I shall never marry another.”

“Do not talk,” and he laughed scornfully. “Your mother, as you say, has already proposed another lover to you, and I am afraid ere the sun comes twice to the meridian you will be his betrothed; then every thought you bestow upon me will be sacrilege. Here religion is more powerful than love.”

“With you, too,” rejoined Grace. “I blush for

my maiden modesty in declaring to you the depths of my love."

"Fear not. Have I not laid my heart bare? Though you have refused me with much consideration and tenderness, the wound is none the less deep."

"I know it. Oh, misery, that I should hurt your feelings," sobbed Grace.

"I must not, cannot, much beloved one, give you up, without making a desperate appeal to your mother, and then, and then," said he with an effort, "I shall be your brother."

And this was the man of whom many of his friends said, "He will soon be no Unitarian, but an atheist."

Montmartre possessed a precious jewel, the nobility of soul, which evoked him to steer clear of infringing one iota upon the filial duty of the girl he loved, almost worshipped. She was hereafter to be enshrined in his heart as something sacred.

As Montmartre pronounced the word "brother," they were startled by flashes of lightning, rolling of thunder and rushing of wind. Large drops of rain began to fall. In their fervid and excited state of mind, they had not observed the approaching indications of a heavy storm.

"Come, we must hurry back to the hotel," and Dr. Montmartre tucked the arm of Grace under his and made rapid strides homeward.

"It seems," said Grace, "as if heaven forbids any relationship between us. God may show us his displeasure through the thunder and lightning of the storm."

"Grace, how superstitious of you to say so. No, we should not give the elements any such inauspicious interpretation."

"My dress is well sprinkled, but we are at home now. There stands mother on the veranda! She looks excited."

Mrs. Feld's distress and perplexity had been extreme. When going to the room of Grace and not finding her there, she was apprehensive that there had been an elopement. Had Dr. Montmartre endeavored to induce Grace to consent to a marriage in opposition to her parents' wishes, no one could have told the result. She was of an easy, vacillating disposition, one moment an optimist and the next, almost before she could take in fresh breath, a pessimist. To her young mind creation was some unintelligible, mysterious entity, whose laws were erratic and at times adverse to human happiness. The nights and mornings of her life came fitfully, reflecting only the lights and shades of her mind.

Mrs. Feld met poor Grace with a lowering brow, and in a harsh voice said to her, "What on earth made you go out in this weather?"

"It was pleasant when I went out," Grace ventured to say.

"Couldn't you see it was going to storm?"

"I did not notice. I am sure I meant to be back soon."

"Never mind, excuses are nothing. Go to your room."

Grace blushed scarlet and hurried off.

"Mrs. Feld," said Montmartre, "do not reproach your daughter. She would not have been

caught in the rain had I not detained her to ask her a question which, with due filial reverence, she and I leave to your authority. Come, allow me," and taking her arm he led her into her sitting room, and then resumed, "Let me add to that question my entreaties and prayers to give me your daughter and make me one of the happiest of men." He finished the sentence with a beseeching look and respectfully kissed her hand.

Mrs. Feld instantaneously gasped his hand from hers, and strode up and down the room, so great was her agitation, exclaiming: "What unheard of boldness, both from you and her. I told that girl what she had to do. Does she think that you, with your fine speeches, can beg me off? Indeed, you shall not."

"Listen to me," said Montmartre, following her up and down the room, which put rather a comical aspect on the affair. "Nothing but our mutual love drives me to implore you to consent to our marriage."

"The marriage is impossible."

"You will not be so cruel as to divide two loving hearts?"

"It is not cruelty; only what is right. In after years you will thank me for this."

"Thank you for breaking my heart? I believe not, Mrs. Feld."

"Dr. Montmartre, allow me to tell you, it takes long years to break hearts. You will not break yours. So don't think of it any more."

"I must. If not, then——"

"Do you mean to say you will have the girl at

all events?" said Mrs. Feld, stopping suddenly and gazing at him defiantly.

"Never," returned the young man firmly, "will my love lead me to dishonor the most sacred precepts of man and God, 'Honor thy father and thy mother.'"

Mrs. Feld's anger was mollified by Dr. Montmartre's high sense of honor, still she frigidly answered: "I must refuse you. You know the line that separates you."

"I'm fully aware of the barrier to which you refer, but it is not impossible; it can be crossed. It is only an imaginary one, my dear Mrs. Feld."

"Pray tell me how it can be crossed?"

"Because Grace can practice all the rites of her religion. I honor and revere the Jewish religion. It was the first true religion, because the Jewish people were the first to worship one God. As we cannot conceive in what shape God exists and you worship a Supreme Being, you are as right on that point as any one; so far we can sing hosannas to the same King of kings and Lord of lords."

"A Protestant minister with a Jewish wife," laughed Mrs. Feld. "It sounds well, doesn't it?"

"For the sake of dear Grace, I shall do much. I will renounce the vocation of my life, the ministry, which is so congenial to my taste."

"No, it will not do. In a few years there would be quarrels about religion any way. All this fine talk about love won't keep them away, and you would be sorry when too late."

"But I assure you, my dear madam, Grace shall have perfect liberty to believe and act as

she pleases. I shall swear on the Holy Book, if necessary, that I shall never interfere with her religious belief."

"I say no. You are not a Jew, and though I am not Orthodox, keeping almost nothing, still my heart is a Jewish one and beats for Judaism. If you were a Jew," and Mrs. Feld thought of her own lax method of devotion, "you might keep the religion as little as you pleased or not at all; it would make no difference. But as it is, never. I beg of you to end this talk. Go and forget her."

"I cannot forget her, I tell you. Grace loves me, too, and cannot be happy either without me."

"Dr. Montmartre, don't trouble yourself about Grace. Before twice twenty-four hours go by she will be engaged to one of my choice, and an engagement with us is sacred. I ask of you, in the goodness of your heart, to spare her the misery of any more visits or walks, as she is so soon to be solemnly betrothed to another."

"Fear not. Only allow me to see her once alone, and then I shall bid farewell to all here."

"You can see her only in my presence. You must have nothing to say to her that every one cannot hear."

"Just once more."

"You have had my answer."

"Inexorable woman, I submit to your terms."

Mrs. Feld called Grace, who came in with a tear-stained face. She asked no questions. Her mother's determined expression and her lover's sorrowful one told her that her doom was sealed. She began to cry softly.

"Dr. Montmartre, please say what you have to say quickly. I hate scenes," and Mrs. Feld turned her face to the window.

"Do not grieve so," said Dr. Montmartre to Grace in a low, tender voice. He did not attempt to take her hand. "It is best to submit to the inevitable. Obey your mother. Some unexpected event may occur to bring us together. If there should ever be the least possibility of such a thing, let no false delicacy prevent you from sending me the blessed news. If it be a month or a century, I shall ever be ready to answer the summons. You know my address. Probably you will be so kind as to write occasionally to Laura—who loves you with all the affection of a sister—and let me know if you are well and happy."

"Never happy."

"Be happy if you can. Throw not God's gift of life and pleasure away. One may 'commit suicide with dark and melancholy thoughts.'"

"My poor heart is breaking," cried Grace.

"Dry your tears and be hopeful, and forget the misery I have unintentionally caused you. Think of me kindly and, farewell. Forgive me," Dr. Montmartre murmured, as he took her in his arms and clasped her to his heart, leaving glowing, burning kisses on her brow, and was gone.

It was so sudden and unexpected that Grace could not resist. Mrs. Feld, though her face reddened with anger, had no time to give vent to the angry expostulations which rose to her lips. Grace, who would have preferred to face the

storm without to the one within, rose, saying, "I shall be back soon, mother."

"Where are you going; to Laura's room? Stay here, you foolish girl. Don't try to speak to brother or sister unless I am with you. Dry your tears. Make yourself smile for the man who is soon to be your accepted lover. Grace, you will in a short time be engaged to one of the grandest of men. Do your best to please."

"It is hard to ask me now to wreath my face in smiles. Can I not remain unmarried—at least for the present? Why this haste?" Grace felt her courage oozing through every pore at the pressure of her mother's compulsory words.

"I am actually worn out with you. If you accept Lavalie willingly, you need not marry before six months, though I detest long engagements, as they often end in disappointments." Sayings are sometimes prophetic. "Then I know you will have thought better of this foolish love; if not, you shall marry immediately. I can't see what you want. You will have elegant diamonds, splendid house on Fifth Avenue, coach and four, footman and livery—think of it—and mix with the best."

"Can display and society recompense me for what I have lost?" moaned Grace.

"You have lost nothing; only think of the gain. What a fortune you will have with Lavalie! You will travel over Europe, and even there, where money is not everything like here, your husband's wealth and name will open all doors for you. Think what Letitia would

give to get such a man—but here comes your father.”

“Oh, papa, dear, I am so glad you have come. You will not make me marry Mr. Lavallo,” and Grace went to embrace him, but almost staggered at his wild eyes and excited appearance.

“What is to do here?” spoke Mr. Feld gruffly. Formerly, when half-inebriated, he had only tenderness for his daughter; his irritable words he generally showered upon his wife. Only when totally intoxicated or extremely annoyed, did he vent his ill-humor by deed or word upon her.

At his harshness her courage ebbed away, and it was all she could do to refrain from tears. “Dear father, I do not want to get married.”

Before Mr. Feld could reply, Mrs. Feld mockingly said, “Her heart is set on Montmartre.”

This was more than Grace could bear. The tears gathered in her eyes, notwithstanding her endeavors to repress them; she knew that they always provoked her father. Mr. Feld never could see why women should cry unless maltreated. Tears were a personal reflection and reproach to him.

“I tell you, girl,” and Mr. Feld’s voice was hoarse with passion, “you should thank heaven for the chance. Accept Lavallo immediately, for I have lost forty thousand dollars by the trump of the card.” His fist came down heavily upon the table; then, in a sorrowful voice, he resumed, “I want my little girl well taken care of, and Lavallo can do that.”

At the announcement of the loss, the mother and daughter simultaneously uttered a cry of de-

spair. Mr. Feld would not have confessed his loss then and there, had he not thought that the fact would compel Grace to marry Laval.

"It is no use, Ruth, for you to raise your hands that way, for you know full well if we had stayed at home things would have been different. Here everything is done on a grand scale, and I must follow. You want to be stylish, takes money, I tell you."

"Henry," replied his wife, "I may make mistakes, but they are simple and few. But you, with your terrible habits, bring us down. We will be ruined I know."

"Yes, my lady, it is now as always. You make it and keep it too hot here. I must be off to meet a friend. It is late already."

"Henry, you dare not go."

"Ruth, you should know by this time hard words never kept me from doing what I wanted to," said Mr. Feld, taking his hat and violently slamming the door after him.

Meanwhile the storm had ceased, the clouds were drifting, the birds singing their sweetest carols, the drooping autumnal flowers lifted their heads; all nature rejoiced at having quenched her thirst.

CHAPTER XIII.

Grace, concluding that her thread of fate had been woven for her, did not struggle to break it, but wept over the inevitable, and meekly folding her hands, said, "What will be, will be." She had lost all hope. Her father's return to drink, his heavy loss at the gaming table, his joy at Laval's proposal, all combined to make her submit. At no point on the horizon at present could she discover a ray of hope for the future. So utterly dark had all things become.

The following day Laura entered Mrs. Feld's room to bid her good-bye, as she and her brother were going home, saying her brother had a letter a few days previous from his congregation, in which they expressed an earnest wish for his return. The minister had received a letter, and Laura, touched to the heart by his misery, took advantage of it to urge him return home, where his lacerated feelings might heal.

"I owe you and your brother many thanks, Miss Montmartre, for your kindness. If I have caused him——"

"No more," cried Laura, interrupting her, "the subject is too painful. Where is Grace?"

"I will call her," said Mrs. Feld, sadly. She opened the door of an inner room and beckoned Grace to come.

"Why, Grace," said Laura, clasping her in her arms, "are you not glad to see me?"

"Laura," sobbed Grace.

"Courage, my dear," replied Laura, while the tears swam in her own eyes, "Arthur will never forget you," she whispered. This was not a great consolation to Grace, who was incapable of making the least effort to save herself from misery.

"Well," continued Laura, in a low tone, "I am waiting. "Have you a message?"

Grace shook her head in the negative.

Laura's arm unclasped and she added, "Probably you are right, Grace, but he does love you so much."

"I know it, I know it," moaned Grace.

"Good-bye," Laura kissed her repeatedly, shook hands hurriedly with Mrs. Feld, and was gone.

Montmartre, true to his word, though it wrung his heart to keep it, saw Grace no more. She watched his and Laura's departure from the window in her room.

"Gone, gone," was the cry of Grace. "I shall see him no more. Before to-morrow evening I shall be affianced to another and then must not—Arthur said so himself—think of him any more. Oh, I love him so much," and she wept bitterly. Childlike, she cried herself to sleep.

"Awake, my child, awake. See how brightly the sun shines in your window on your engagement day. My, what a girl! You did not undress last night. Come, hurry up, Mr. Laval

will soon be waiting in the parlor for you to hear the word 'yes' from your own lips."

Grace, at her mother's call, jumped up laughing, when instantly her mind reverted to the painful trial she had undergone, momentarily blotted out by "nature's sweet restorer."

"Mother, I need not be in such a hurry. I am sleepy and tired."

"You can't be sleepy, Grace. Here, change your dress. Go to work quickly. Now, for your ribbons," and Mrs. Feld stood by her, urging, assisting, and bidding her "hurry," until finally her toilet was completed.

After a light breakfast Grace went into the private parlor.

"My dear Miss Feld," said Lavalley, "I have been anxiously waiting for you. I am afraid I have disturbed you. It is only ten o'clock," said he, looking at his watch, "but I hope you will excuse me for calling so early; my impatience was too great to wait until a later hour."

Grace, not knowing what to say, or, rather, what was required of her, said, "No disturbance at all."

"Come, sit down on this sofa," added Lavalley. "So now give me your hand. I want to stop your trembling. You are not frightened of me, are you?"

"I do not know whether I should be or not. I do not think I am," she returned.

"To be sure you are not. You have no cause. I am sure, Grace, dear, I may call you by that name, may I not?" asked Lavalley.

"Yes," she answered, slightly smiling.

"Grace, we are coming to a very good understanding. If you will only say 'Yes' to another little question I am going to ask, you will be the sweetest, the most charming girl in the world. Grace," said he with earnestness, "you will not refuse me?"

"I am sure—oh, I do not know what you want."

"I will tell you, dearest, what I want—I want you. With you in my possession, I shall have gained a priceless treasure. Will you entrust yourself to me? For heaven's sake, speak. It is not hard to say 'Yes.' Try if you cannot articulate it." But Grace remaining mute, he resumed, "Ah! I love you so dearly that you must—that you will say 'Yes.' I am waiting." He looked with eager eyes into her face.

"Yes," came slowly from the lips of Grace. She turned deathly white.

Lavalle clasped her in his arms, murmuring, as he kissed her, "Mine, mine forever."

The tears stole down the cheeks of Grace. She was thinking of Dr. Montmartre's misery and Lavalle's happiness; of the former's anguish in his unlicensed embrace of yesterday, of the latter's triumph in his privileged one of to-day.

"Dear Grace, why these tears? Are your emotions too deep for utterance?"

Grace made no reply, but her tears continued to flow.

"Just give me a few words; for instance, say, 'I love you.' I want to hear how it sounds from your lips," said Lavalle, charmed with a coyness so full of maiden modesty.

"Will you not wait a little?"

"If it please you, of course I shall. I am your slave, you know. You may smile, though, will you not?" added Lavalley, gayly. "I love to bask in the sunshine of woman's smile. 'The earth was sad, the garden was a wild, And man the hermit sighed, till woman smiled.'" How true seemed Campbell's beautiful lines to him then!

A half-smile broke over Grace's features, but it ended in a little sob. The sob was a tribute to the memory of a first love, now dashed forever away by this forced, sudden acceptance of a second. What human contrivance could now span the distance that separated her from Montmartre?

In a short time Mrs. Feld came in. Lavalley arose with Grace on his arm, saying, with sparkling face and beaming eyes: "Dear madam, kiss your daughter and then kiss me, your son-in-law-elect. A cloudless sky without, sunshine and serenity within, what a future opens before us! Grace will never repent this step."

"I am sure not," replied Mrs. Feld warmly. "My husband and I cannot be too thankful for such a son-in-law. You are all that we could wish for the husband of our darling girl. God bless you both."

Mr. Feld was in ecstasies at the new prospect, the more so as his own fortune would soon be gone. "Ruth, you deserve a compliment. No other woman is as smart as you are. This is what I call doing things up neat. Ha, ha, ha! you are

better than a deal of cards full of trumps," and he boisterously kissed her.

They all left the next day for New York. Mr. Lavalley had no relatives there, but he had numerous friends, and the betrothal was celebrated in the style befitting his princely fortune. He lavished upon Grace presents of the rarest precious stones. The most of her trousseau was to come from Paris, that *dépot* of fashion so dear to woman's heart.

"Grace," said Lavalley, "I have taken a box for the theater to-night."

"What are they going to play?"

"The Merchant of Venice—I suppose you have seen it, have you?"

"No, I have not. I am afraid I shall not like it," replied Grace.

"Because it refers to the Jews? Well, we simply go to see a famous actor delineate a character. We read now in the Italian story that the original Shylock was not the Jew that Shakespeare made him, but a Jew to fit in with the prejudices of the times—if he had been, that would not prevent me or you either, I hope, from going to-night. Be ready on time, as I do not wish to miss one word."

At the appointed time Lavalley came, and when they arrived at the theater, the house was densely crowded.

As Jessica came upon the stage, Grace said: "William, can you approve of such a daughter? For heaven's sake, tell me quickly. What do you think?"

"To be sure not. The ingratitude of a child 'is

sharper than a serpent's tooth.' But what makes you so agitated? You do not need to trouble yourself on that score."

"I read the Merchant of Venice, and was thinking of what she will do. She commits two sins, she steals and marries against her father's wish. Is it a crime for a father to cry out in despair and anger against a daughter who has deserted, deceived and robbed him?"

"No, certainly not. Do not think so much now, my dear, look on the stage." Subsequently, Lavalle said, "Shylock will now demand the pound of flesh."

"Gracious heavens! Shylock makes me nervous. He is so sordid, so covetous, so money-loving, so revengeful, that such a person cannot be a man; he must be a vampire to want a man's blood for ducats."

"Grace, I am surprised at you. Here you are shrinking and shuddering as if it were indeed true."

"Do you think it never happened? See, they are pelting the miserable Jew off the stage!" and Grace covered her face with her hands and leaned back in her chair.

"Why, my dear girl, that is an honor to the actor. The audience is electrified by his superb acting and triumphant genius. They think they have a real, live Jew there. Here, do not be so timid. Uncover your face—there."

"I tell you," said Grace excitedly, "I would rather be dead than think that God had made men of my race so despicable, so destitute of all feelings of humanity."

"To my view of thinking, Shylock is not so mercenary as the world generally believes, otherwise he would have taken the ducats for the pound of flesh. He is no longer the money lender, 'glittering in his cold-heartedness as steel,' but he rises to the dignity of the avenger. It is the flesh he wants—vengeance for the wounding of his most tender susceptibilities, vengeance for the insults, abuse and ridicule heaped upon him and his race. Shylock is only debased when he accepts his life as the price of his concession. You must not forget that all denominations and nationalities produce monsters. I am a Jew; am I one like Shylock appears to the Christian mind? No, I am like many others, liking the rosy path of flowers and loving the dear little girl I have chosen with all my heart. You are morbid in your sensitiveness."

"I wish never to see this play again."

"I shall not take you, of that you may rest assured. We shall go home now." Grace gave Lavallo a grateful look.

"Dear mother," said Grace, the day after the scene at the theater, "William is very kind."

"Kind, is it?" returned her mother. "He is the best man in the world. See what he gives you. You have everything that your heart can wish for."

"I am afraid I can never return all this," said Grace, reflectively.

"Yes, you can, my child," said her mother, laying her hand gently on the shoulder of Grace. "Love him with all your soul. That is all the pay a good man wants."

"I love him a little already. It is strange how a new love can be so soon kindled on the old. I did not think it could be," said Grace, in the simplicity of her heart. Truly she did not know herself yet.

"You just keep on trying to love Lavallo. I do not think you will find it a very hard matter. You have not looked over all he sent you to-day. I think you will be able to start a dry-goods and jewelry store."

"Let me see them; I love beautiful things," and Grace, who had all the Oriental taste for splendor, laughed gleefully.

"You like these things very much, I know. So you must——"

"Admire the giver, mother? I think I shall. Lavallo is ever tender, never obtrusive."

The weeks drifted by and December had fairly set in, when Mr. and Mrs. Feld decided to return to their home in Missouri.

"William," exclaimed Grace to Lavallo, "I do not believe I shall be able to wait until you come." Even as she spoke a remembrance of Dr. Montmartre shot through her mind, revealing the inconstancy of her nature.

"You are aware that it is your parents' desire, but only say the word now, my darling, and I am with you. It is a long time to May. I think your parents imposed a very hard condition upon me. I shall try and induce them to absolve me from my promise."

"No, no; the time is not too long. I shall endure your absence," said Grace.

"Please do not say that. I shall feel better to

think that you are anxiously waiting, impatiently longing to see me. As to letters, write me two a day, so that if one miscarry, I may at least get one."

"How many will you write?"

"I shall give you 'measure for measure.'"

"Indeed," said Mrs. Feld, coming in unobserved, "if she should fail to get letters regularly, I am afraid I shall have a sorry time of it. Say all you have to say, Grace, for in an hour we start. I am really anxious to be home once more."

"Mrs. Feld, would you not like to shorten the time of our engagement? It is a very long wait for me. Grace thinks so, too," said Lavalley, artfully.

"Mother, I never."

"You can both wait, I think." Mrs. Feld closed her eyes for a moment, lost in a happy reverie over the successful result of her plans.

CHAPTER XIV.

The streets and houses of D—— were clad in a pure white dress of snow to welcome home the travelers. The Felds came to the dear, old place flushed with pleasure and triumph. Letitia flew to her aunt's, took Grace in her arms and almost smothered her with caresses. "Only think of our demure little kitten going to be married, and before me too! What a charming little hypocrite you are. You know you always tried to make me believe that you thought men monsters!"

"Well, Letitia, never fear. You have developed in these few months to be the most ravishing creature in the world. And your eyes, dear, are wonderfully fascinating; what a look they have! Pray take them off me," added Grace, with a slight shudder.

"I assure you," replied her cousin, laughing immoderately, "I can use my eyes well. When I was in St. Louis I drew many a poor fool irresistibly to my feet and then I sent him away with his heart in his mouth."

"Why, you are a regular coquette. Beware that you are not caught in your own net."

"All men are not born to conquer, and then—" added Letitia, spitefully, "I never pretended to be such a staid little body as you. I am passionate and impulsive. I glory in being able to throw arrows when and where I will."

"Throw all you like, only not in my direction. I thought you would have captured that handsome lawyer by this time."

"That man! he is as impenetrable as a Sphinx. The idea of his going around and not paying court to a single girl in town. I should like to know what he means!"

"Probably he cannot spare the time to court. He is very ambitious."

"Is he not rising in his profession? But you have been away and do not know. Contrary to all expectations, he won the case for Niles. It is rumored that Berkhoff assisted him. In what way I don't know, but he is a great deal with Berkhoff I hear. Of course, Niles' case brought him a handsome fee and, what is more, many clients. He is the most promising lawyer in town. Now he has grown cold, haughty, reserved. Looks pale, some say 'sad,' some say 'over-worked.' I believe it is pride."

"A queer way for pride to show itself," laughed Grace. "How are Rebecca and her mother."

"Mrs. Silverbaum," responded Letitia, "is growing stouter and pants more than ever. Rebecca comes around ever so often. When she hears you have come she will not give you time to get your things unpacked before she will be here to satisfy her curiosity. She is wild to hear about your intended. She often says, 'Berkhoff is none too young, but he is good and rich.' I should think he was good. Lavishes things upon her as if he were, indeed, a prince."

"He is very well off; at least, father once said

he was. Naturally, he tries to make Rebecca happy."

"But there are rumors that Berkhoff is shaky. Where will Rebecca's lofty dreams be should he tumble?"

"Poor Berkhoff, I hope things are not as they are reported. I am glad he is engaged, for I believe Rebecca, notwithstanding all her love of finery, is a good soul at heart. You can condemn no one till tried."

"First, I believe any man in such a condition is better off not engaged; secondly, I wouldn't wager any money on Rebecca's love and goodness of heart."

"Letitia, much as I love everything grand and beautiful, I almost wish that Lavalley would lose his wealth, so that I could show him that I love him for himself alone."

"Nonsense, don't be soft. I would be the last one to desert a man if he lost everything, but strip a man of his wealth and power to give, and what remains? I tell you it would be a bitter draught for me to swallow," added Letitia, making a wry face.

"What a girl you are," said Grace, laughing. "But, tell me something else. How is my dear Lizzie—now a sister, I suppose? When I first left here I received several letters, but lately I have not heard from her. I presume she has been too busy with her religious duties."

"I am almost ashamed to say, I have never been near the convent since you left. What with mother being sick, spending a few weeks in St. Louis, visiting here, and attending the children,

there are so many of us," said Letitia, deprecatingly, "I found no time for the convent. Well, I know you will make up for it. But I must tell you there is an addition to the town in the shape of another bank. I do not know if it is such a solid concern as our Missouri Bank. It offers to advance money on valuables, jewels and such like. Dear me, the cashier is such a nice, dapper young man, that I almost wish I had diamonds to pledge so as to have a good talk with him."

"Make use of your magnificent eyes, my dear."

"He is a Christian, and I don't want to break the poor fellow's heart. Ah me!"

Grace winced under this unintentional home thrust and remained silent.

Letitia resumed: "And the house around the corner that was so long vacant is now occupied by a staunch Catholic family. I called on the young lady. I think the church should vote her a resolution of thanks for her proselytizing disposition. And she is always talking of the future life! I told her that my belief was that the good, irrespective of their religious convictions, would go to heaven. As I do not know what death may bring, I prefer remaining here—forever if I could."

"I do not blame you, Letitia, and I think many wish as you do."

"Let me tell you that Mary Moss, our young neighbor, is more zealous for the church than your friend Lizzie was. She will exert all her powers to convert you. Her mother is a good, talkative person, who is on the best terms with everybody. There, have I told you news?"

"Indeed you have. I am so very happy now that I am not at all afraid of Miss Mary's persuasive powers," and Grace looked up with a radiant smile.

"Grace, your trunks have come. I am dying to see your exquisite gems and splendid dresses," and the two cousins were soon plunged in raptures over the "beautiful things," so dear to woman's heart.

"Mother," cried Letitia, as she returned home, "I am miserable."

"Why, what is the matter, child?"

"Am I not dazzlingly beautiful? Are not my finely molded arms and neck better adapted for glittering gems and symmetrical form for silk and laces than Grace's?"

"Indeed," replied Mrs. Rheinberg, "it should have been you. You are older and there are more to follow. But your time will come, child. See what a fine time you had in St. Louis. Every one after you."

"Such eligible offers!" said Letitia, scornfully. "Fops without money or brains."

"Your father told me of one man with plenty of money who was crazy for you."

"Yes, an old withered apple. I would not, could not, marry him if he had a diamond mine."

"To be sure you would not. You want some one who understands you. He will come, he will come," said her mother, soothingly.

"I have no patience with anything. Here is this chit of a girl enjoying 'golden opportunities,' taking advantage of them and becoming happy. My soul craves for what she has. I have nothing,

nothing," Letitia moaned and sobbed in mortification and rage.

"How it worries me to see you behave like this. And your father would think you unthankful. He feels it so when you are not happy. Try and be contented. God will remember you," added Mrs. Rheinberg, earnestly.

"Shall I be contented to wear wild flowers, mother, while she wears sparkling jewels? No, never. My mirror tells me a tale of which I shall make use," and Letitia ran to the mirror and gazed at herself exultingly.

The most exquisitely cut bottles sometimes contain the vilest compounds, like physical beauty when associated with moral deformity.

"Is it not strange, Mary," said Grace, some two months after her arrival home, "that we have become in such a short time such good friends?"

"No, not at all," answered Miss Moss. "There is an affinity in our natures which draws us together. I am unhappy when I do not see you every day. That is the reason that I am here so often. Grace, you are so good that I wish you were one of us."

"Do you know, you are such a devotee that I am surprised you have no desire to take the veil!"

"I have religious aspirations, though."

"Yes. Will you tell me what they are?"

"Willingly. To make converts. Were I a recluse I could not come in contact with some people who would not come into the fold without my influence."

"Will you never get married?"

"I may; I cannot tell. I have a mission to fulfill; the Lord will guide me," said Mary, with enthusiasm.

"Does not God guide all who ask for guidance?"

"If you have the right belief, he does; otherwise not."

"Suppose," said Grace, "I were a Pagan and had not the right idea of God, what then?"

"You would have to think right, especially when others brought you light. If not, you would be lost."

"That makes me shudder. Let us talk of something else. I wish it were May."

"Aha! longing to see some one?"

At this moment Letitia entering, said: "Though everything is so dull and prosaic now, gay times are in prospective when Lavalley comes. Then there will be any number of picnics, parties, and, to cap the climax, I shall be bridesmaid. I should have been bride," said she, sotto voce.

"Think not so much of the joys of this life; they are fleeting. Lay up treasures in heaven," and Mary raised her eyes heavenward.

"Stuff, nonsense! No more theological discussions, please. I want to talk about dress and handsome bipeds," said Letitia.

"Do these handsome fellows talk about you, Letitia? I forgot, Mr. Everard may."

As Everard had not paid Letitia any attention, Mary's remark made her furious. "Bah!" exclaimed she. "You are an old maid."

"Letitia, are not you ashamed of yourself?"

"Leave her alone," replied Mary, "she is in a pet. You will do, Letitia."

"Of course I will," answered Letitia, reddening. "I must be going. Good-bye."

CHAPTER XV.

Time sped swiftly by, ushering in fickle April with its sunshine and showers. The earth, tired of her torpidity and warmed by the genial sun, awoke to renewed life, and commenced to deck with her floral tributes the smiling spring. The hardy and golden-headed crocus and the modest snow-drop, heralds of their species, lifted their heads proudly above the fast disappearing snow. Here and there the sweet anemone and the sprouting cotyledons of many plants testified that all-creative spring had come to revive and gladden the heart of man. In a few weeks more the snow would be gone, the earth once more covered with her carpet of green, and the returning birds singing their joy that nature had cast aside her weeds and gloom. Nature is the book of æsthetics that all may read and understand. There is naught to offend the eye or disgust the taste. All is universal harmony of sublimity, beauty, discrimination, sapience and admirable prescience.

"Well, Grace, what does Lavalie say?" asked Mrs. Feld, a few moments after her daughter had broken the seal of a letter from her lover.

"Joy! Mother, Lavalie is coming a little earlier than we expected, is it not?"

"I suppose he could wait no longer."

"Mother, this letter has been delayed. From the date, I may expect him this very day."

"Is that so, Grace? How glad I am."

"How shall I pass the time? It makes me so nervous and excited that I can scarcely wait," and the tremor of her voice fully confirmed her words.

"Have patience, darling. Do some little thing and time will pass quicker," said the mother, delighted at her child's happiness, though ever fearful that something would occur to mar her well conceived and nearly executed project.

"Mamma, do you know that Letitia is almost as anxious as I am to see William. She forms a hundred plans for May excursions, parties, etc. Nothing interests her but to talk of *him*. But," said Grace, as if a sudden thought struck her, "don't you think she is much changed? She no longer confides in me, nor does she appear as free and easy when with me as formerly. Her actions are more restrained and more impetuous. I cannot understand her."

"Maybe," answered her mother, in a tone meant to be careless, "she envies you a match which will make you everywhere distinguished."

"You frighten me."

"What a queer girl you are. What is there to frighten you now?" questioned her mother.

"I am ashamed to express my thoughts, still I will tell you. Letitia is very beautiful; may not my charms pale in the eye of Lavalie before hers?"

"Silly girl! Do you think he has never seen a pretty woman since you left him? He loves you too much, though, ever to think of any one else,"

"Your words quiet my apprehension, mother. How can I ever do without you?"

"When you have your husband, you will not only think you do not need me, but, perhaps, forget me."

"Forget you! never, mother. How can you think so?" said Grace, kissing her as the tears rose in her eyes.

"Never mind, child. You are very loving, I know. Don't cry; keep your eyes bright; Lavalley may step in any moment. Men like smiles better than tears; remember that, Grace, though I have not always remembered it."

"Mother, I wish you would tell me——"

"No questions to-day," interrupted her mother. "You are to look pretty and so you do."

"This pale blue merino, with its white velvet trimmings, is becoming. I hope William will think so. He is very fastidious," said Grace, as she threw herself in a negligent attitude on the lounge.

"Rest a little, sleep if you can. You will look better than after work."

"Work? I scarcely know what it is."

"Thank God for that. I shall leave you for awhile," said Mrs. Feld, going out of the room.

Grace, left to herself, fell into a reverie, in which Dr. Montmartre, Letitia and Lavalley were prominent. From thinking she must have fallen into a doze. "Lavalley," she exclaimed, with a start, "am I dreaming or waking?"

"My darling Grace," said Lavalley, as he clasped her in his arms, "I am no vision, but real flesh and blood. I drove here direct from

the train, saw a door partially open and stole in. I presumed to enter and saw my 'sleeping beauty.' You need not blush so, Grace. Come—whom have we here?"

The door opened noiselessly, and there stood Letitia, looking exceedingly beautiful. "I beg a thousand pardons; I was not aware that any one was with you, Cousin Grace," remarked she.

"Come in, Letitia. Allow me to present to you Mr. Lavalley, my intended. William, my cousin, Letitia, of whom I have often spoken."

"Happy to make your acquaintance, my cousin that is to be," said Lavalley, shaking hands with her.

"The happiness is mutual," said Letitia, with downcast eyes. "We have all been anxious to see and welcome you."

"Tell him nothing of that sort," said Grace. "You will make him vain and spoil him."

"Very well, then; I shall not tell any one what sleepless nights I have had, what miserable days I have passed, thinking of a little girl in a far western town. Every one in New York said, 'Go, don't wait until the time expires, you will be ill.' All that you shall not know," returned Lavalley.

"You do look pale," said Grace, anxiously. "How stupid I am. I shall ring for refreshments. Here is mamma; she will attend to all."

"Grace, what a girl you are not to call me to see William—my son—I may call him. How happy I am. How did you get in? How well you look," said Mrs. Feld, all in a breath, shak-

ing Lavalles hand and patting him on the shoulder.

"Mother, he is not well; he can't sleep. I am afraid——"

"It is only strong love-fever," said Lavalles, in answer to Mrs. Feld's concerned look.

"It is best to let it rage, aunt," spoke Letitia, raising her eyes.

"I think I shall," responded Mrs. Feld, laughing heartily.

"Never put yourself, my fair cousin, in my predicament," said Lavalles, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Don't think I ever shall," returned Letitia, blushing.

"And your father, Grace, dear?" inquired Lavalles.

"He does not expect you to-day. Your letter was delayed. He will be in the seventh heaven."

"Where is that, my precious?" asked Lavalles, and without waiting for a reply said, "I shall not tell you where I think it is."

Refreshments were now brought in, and Letitia, though pressed to remain, would not. She declared she must inform her folks, who were dying to have a "peep" at him, and he expressed himself ready for inspection.

"Mother," cried Letitia, rushing into her mother's room, "I am more miserable than ever. Lavalles has come."

"Has he? Well, then, there will be gay times. Come, you must get over this feeling."

"Yes, I have seen this Apollo, this Cræsus; heavens, what a man! And to think he is so en-

raptured with my passive cousin. What is she compared to brilliant me?"

"She can't hold a candle to you, my child," said Mrs. Rheinberg.

"But, notwithstanding, she is incomparably happy, and I am so unhappy! She seems not to walk, but float with aerial grace, her voice and actions are all transformed. Love has encircled her with a halo of glory and made her almost as beautiful as I am. Poor me! standing by, envy and discontent gnawing at my heart, to see my wondrous beauty slighted," and Letitia commenced to sob.

"Child, child, you must not give way so."

"I cannot help it. I feel the demon rising within me, and I wish in my agony to snatch him from her and hurl her into the depths of despair. But 'nil desperandum.'"

"Letitia, what is that gibberish? Are you going mad?" anxiously inquired her mother.

"Pshaw, what do you mean?" said Letitia, with a half smile. "Zimmerman, an author, says, 'Beauty is worse than wine, it intoxicates both the holder and the beholder.' I feel the fumes ascending my head; I am growing reckless. It incites me on to conquest."

"Letitia, I wish you would be reasonable. You put altogether too high a value on your beauty. There is your cousin with half of it——"

"Stop a bit, mother. Had I seen Lavalie when Grace did, she would not, could not, have had him."

"This Lavalie can't be nicer than Mark Ever-

ard. Jew and Gentile give him a name, and such a name. 'There is always as good fish in the water as out.' No man stands higher than Everard," said Mrs. Rheinberg, soothingly.

"He is so wrapped up in his profession and what else I don't know, that women have no charm for him. It is 'Love's labor lost' to fish for him. I should be willing to die like Samson if I could pull Grace down with me."

"You mustn't talk so. It is sinful," added Mrs. Rheinberg.

"But fate is so hard on me."

"Well, God does what is for the best."

"He wants us, though, to make use of our opportunities and make ourselves happy if we can."

"To be sure, my child; it would be wrong not to do our best to be happy and good."

"Mother, please forget this emotion of mine. I think I am not very well, otherwise I should not have so lost my self-control."

"Of course you are not, my darling, my noble, my beautiful girl. Smile and be yourself once more," said the fond mother, as she pressed her child to her heart.

"Yes, mother, the storm is over. I am now going to make the best use of opportunities and make myself happy," added the designing girl, chuckling with delight, as she thought that La-valle must continually pass her house to see Grace.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Dear Letitia," said Grace, "on the first of May we are to have a picnic. I have already talked it over with girls of our acquaintance, and Mary Moss—just think—has consented to come. It promises to be a pleasant affair. Lavalley, William, I should say, assented eagerly when I proposed it. He is so anxious to please. He almost anticipates my wishes, and is a most devoted lover," and she bent her head to hide the blushes which suffused her innocent face.

Letitia bowed her head to conceal her rage. Each word of her cousin was like a dagger piercing her heart. But the instant she looked up her face was wreathed in smiles, and the lovely viper lifted her cousin's head, looked into her eyes, saying sweetly and affectionately: "When is the wedding to be? I am more interested in what concerns your whole future than in the transient pleasures of an hour."

"William was anxious to have it take place immediately, and so were mother and father, but I pleaded hard to have it deferred a while yet; and so, as in all things, he has yielded to my wishes."

"Aunt and uncle should allow events to take their course. It does not look well for them to urge the wedding," replied Letitia, insinuatingly.

"Mamma and papa always act for the best, though they do seem somewhat in a hurry," responded Grace, carelessly.

"Well," said Letitia, with a wise look, "let us arrange affairs for the picnic. Let us show this New Yorker what a delightful time we townspeople can have. Is Rebecca Silverbaum to come? And Mark Everard, what of him?"

"To be sure, Rebecca is to come. Papa made no objection when I said Berkhoff would have to come with her. He nodded and said, 'That's understood.' As for Everard, we can't well dispense with him. I am sure he will come, for William and he like each other already. They are kindred spirits."

"I suppose he knows Lavalles is rich and courts his society?"

"You mistake the man, Letitia. He would not bend to a mortal unless to a woman. The greatest men are weak in that point. See William, the noblest man in the world, surrendering his wishes to mine, seeing only with my eyes."

"Men don't mean all they say, my dear. Horace says something about 'man's promises being like autumn leaves,' and——"

"Not another word," said Grace, resolutely.

"How spunky you are becoming. That is right. Do you know something?" asked Letitia, changing the subject. "Papa has decided to let me have a party next week to celebrate Lavalles's arrival. He wanted to have the affair this week, but as I want it to be very fine, I wish to defer it. I need time to prepare, as everything depends upon me. Now, where is the picnic to be?" and

the two cousins were soon absorbed digesting their plans.

On that May day, which Grace had appointed for the picnic, Old Sol came out with undiminished splendor, the birds sang sweetly, the brooks babbled merrily, the atmosphere was odorous with the perfume of flowers, and the grand Mississippi shone like a silver belt across the landscape—unconcerned about macrocosm or microcosm.

"Let me call the roll," said Letitia, "to see if you are all here," and she laughingly counted the company at Mrs. Feld's home.

"In what direction are we going?" inquired Mary Moss, shaking off her previous apathy.

"We are going a few miles south, where there is a charming grove that woos us to its shade, spreading for us a soft, flower-spangled carpet."

When the whole party arrived at the wharf, where there were a number of skiffs, Mary turned pale, and said: "I detest going in those small boats. They make me nervous. They are insecure."

"No fear, Miss Moss. I am a good swimmer," added Everard.

"Are you? I am glad. I shall be one of your party then."

"So will I," shouted Berkhoff. "I can't swim, and if anything happens you must save my Rebecca; she is so heavy, she will go under quick, I am afraid."

"My boat has full freight now," rejoined Everard, laughing heartily with the rest at Berkhoff's rude, but good-natured sally.

"Here, Letitia," said Lavalley, "come into our boat. There is room for you, Mr. Atherton, and for you, Mr. Benson," to which the two gentlemen complied with alacrity.

"All ready?" asked Lavalley.

"Yes," was the merry answer. The gentlemen plied the oars and the little boats shot gracefully down the stream, some going abreast, others following.

"Sing, Grace," said Lavalley, "this is novel as well as pleasant." Grace, happy as a bird, sang in a sweet contralto voice, "The Earth with Her Ten Thousand Flowers." Mr. Atherton accompanied her in a fine baritone. The chorus was taken up by the others, and produced a thrilling effect.

"Why don't you sing, Miss Rheinberg?" asked her companions.

Letitia laughed and said, "I have a cold," mentally she asked herself, "Why should I sing? There is no song in my heart, why should there be one in my voice?"

"She is," said Benson, who was a warm but, through her creed, an undeclared admirer of Letitia, "a splendid vocalist. Had she wished she might have ranked among the first prima donnes of the age."

"It is a pity that she did not go to Italy," returned Lavalley, laconically.

"Let me assist you in rowing," said Benson, endeavoring to give Letitia time to recover her composure.

"It is too bad, Mr. Benson," added Letitia, sweetly, "that this horrid cold deprives me of the

pleasure of pleasing you. Some other time I shall make up for this." She wished to reserve this battery for some other occasion.

"Here we are at the landing. Come, Grace," said Lavalle.

"I am ready to assist you," said Benson to Letitia, as they arrived at the landing.

"I, too, Miss Rheinberg," added Atherton.

"Thanks. Between you both I have no doubt that I shall land safely."

"Oh, my dress is in the water," screamed Rebecca, as Berkhoff attempted to take her out of the skiff. "Mr. Everard, where are you?"

"Here I am. You shall not drown. Miss Moss is safely landed, and now for you. Here you are on terra firma. How is the dress? I have the basket, so come."

The other gentlemen followed Everard's example, and they soon reached the grove.

"Now, for the work of fairy fingers. Here are the tables, ladies. Our first work will be to eat," said Lavalle.

"Let me assist. I can make myself useful," remarked Everard.

"Everard, how did you enjoy yourself in your boat between Rebecca and Mary. I pitied you, poor fellow, upon my word, I did," said Lavalle, laughing.

"Do you think, Lavalle, because you had two such pretty women with you that every other man in the company deserved sympathy?"

"Of one sweet, pretty girl I know, but the other is only so so."

"Gentlemen," said Benson, "come, no more

talking now. How can you stand aside and see these lovely creatures doing all the work? Everard, look at that Miss Rheinberg; see the poise of her head. She is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. I wonder she does not turn all your heads."

"Why doesn't she turn yours, my young fellow? You are a fine specimen of manhood. If you are as susceptible as all that, go and win her," added Everard.

"If I could batter down that barrier, religion, I would go to work at once."

"Is that barrier so hard to break?" continued Everard, turning pale.

"Man, it is the most trying. The greatest sacrifice one can bring to the altar is one's creed; where all should be unity of thought and feeling. And then between our two religions there is such a wide chasm that can never be crossed," responded Benson.

"Speak only for yourself, young man, and not for all Christendom," gasped Everard.

"Why, what is the matter with you? I was told, excuse me, that you are a Jew, though I did not want to believe it. Neither your face nor your manners are like one," said Benson.

"You were told right. I am a Jew," answered Everard, proudly. "There are many such as I am, and I think many better specimens."

"I have never seen one like you. Everard, you have a chance to win that lovely girl."

"Nonsense, Mr. Benson. My profession is my bride. How we have talked away the time.

See Lavalle and Grace. There is a doting love for you."

"This is grand. Look at our dining-room, the ceiling is lapis lazuli. On the interlacing boughs of these trees hamadryads have lived and died. On these walls our eyes can gaze forever without fatigue, not because they are green, but because they are lined with pretty girls. Come, my queen," said Lavalle to Grace, throwing over her head a wreath of the rarest exotics, which he had brought and carefully concealed in a box. "We shall place ourselves at the head of the table, which will be the signal for the others to follow."

"Many cheers for our beautiful queen," exclaimed the ladies and gentlemen simultaneously, as they sat down and laughed, talked and ate until the most tempting viands were consumed. Then the two musicians were told to "strike."

"Come, Grace, we are going to have a dance. Take your partners, gentlemen."

"I tell you, William, it is your duty to dance with every girl here," added Grace, after the first dance was over.

"But, Grace," pleaded Lavalle, "I want to dance with you all the time. Think what a long time I had to stay in New York, and won't you now be kind to a body?"

"No, sir; every man must do his duty," returned she, playfully.

"Shall I have to dance with the Silver——"

"Yes, yes; with the Silver and the Gold—with Letitia and all of them. Here comes Mr. Everard for me." And his request for the next dance

was granted by Grace responding mischievously, "With pleasure."

"I say, Everard, that is rather cool. You didn't ask my permission."

"What a grasping monopolist you are. Come, come, take Berkhoff's place a little while."

"Grace, look out. I sacrifice myself to your command," said Lavalie, bowing low, looking very grave, and walking off to Rebecca.

"Do you think he feels unhappy about it?" said Grace.

"You are jesting, are you not?" returned Everard, attentively regarding her.

"I should not like to hurt his feelings, he is so good."

"Miss Feld, you are too good and considerate. I believe you are incapable of injuring any one by word or deed."

Grace made no reply, but her face indicated the satisfaction she experienced at these words.

"Well, Grace, have I been gone long enough?" said Lavalie to her, as she stood talking to Mr. Atherton. "I have danced with all the young ladies."

"And I shall go and supply your place," returned Atherton.

"Grace, I danced twice with Letitia. I had performed my *duty* and was coming to you when I passed her. She said, 'This rough floor impedes dancing, but you are a splendid dancer.' Without thinking, I said, 'Shall we have another?' She answered, 'Certainly.'"

"You did right to dance with her again if it pleased her."

"But no more roaming away from you. Let us sit down over there in that shady nook and in this dreamy, favoring twilight let your lips tell me how much you love me. I have not been able to tell you to-day more than twenty times that I love you. Come, Grace, you must not blush so. Let us talk about the future and be happy in it," and Lavalley, tenderly placing her arm in his, walked to the inviting spot.

"Lavalley," subsequently exclaimed Everard, "I have been looking everywhere for you. The sun's declining rays warn us to depart."

"Mr. Everard," called Mary, "I am going in your boat. I want to be safe."

"Certainly; you came with me and you shall return with me. Ah! I was just going to look for you, Berkhoff."

"Here I am, and my fair Rebecca, too."

Everard smiled at Berkhoff, who was holding Rebecca as if he were afraid she would run away.

"I am very fair, am I not, Mr. Everard?"

"You are a lily, Rebecca; don't mind what Everard says, he don't understand colors," said Berkhoff.

"Did you ever see such a man?" said Mary in an undertone. "That girl white! she is as brown as mahogany. A singular lily she is."

"Don't make me laugh with your comparisons. But, Miss Moss, love, like fortune, is blind. To Berkhoff Miss Rebecca is beautiful. He adores

her in his own way just as much as Lavallo does that gentle Grace."

"You think that possible? See him ahead of us, dragging her along," rejoined Mary. "Grace is of a different mold from Rebecca."

"To be sure she is, but Berkhoff, with his rough exterior, has a sound heart."

After they were seated, Everard continued: "Let us work. We are in advance of the others; let us keep ahead."

"We are going fast now, ain't we?" said Berkhoff.

"We will be at home very soon now. I know ma will have coffee waiting for us, and something more substantial too. She will think we must be hungry. Come home with us, Mr. Everard," said Rebecca.

"No, thanks; I shall see Miss Moss home and then go to the office. I have a little work to do yet."

"You are always busy as a bee. We are ahead of the other boats," said Rebecca.

"Yes, but there is a boat in advance of us. It can't be of our party," said Everard.

"I wonder who is in there?" inquired Mary.

"I can distinguish the outline of four forms, but not their faces. Two ladies and two gentlemen," returned Everard.

"Pull, pull; we must come up to 'em. They go slow, we must run," said Berkhoff.

"Don't run us on a sand-bar or ashore or collide with these people. I don't want to be upset," returned Rebecca.

"We can almost hear them talk. I know one voice; it is Mr. Bennett's," said Mary.

"We are at home now. My God!" cried Rebecca, "the skiff is upset. Two are out. Berkhoff, I shall go mad. Hear that woman's shrieks," and she crouched down in the boat.

In an instant Everard had thrown off his coat and plunged into the water. The woman rose to the surface; he caught her in his arms; her long hair uncoiled and twined around him as he swam to the shore with her.

"Blessed be God!" he cried, as he laid her on the ground and the moon illumined her features, "that it is I who have saved her."

"Help! help!" shrieked a woman, and Everard saw a man struggling to keep a body above water. "I am coming," he shouted, and once more plunged into the water, caught the almost drowning man and brought him to land safely. With a few vigorous strokes the other man, Mr. Bennett, was back to his companion and rowed up to the landing.

Everard laid the man down and supported the woman.

"What can I do, what shall I do?" said Berkhoff, now running up, after taking out Rebecca and Mary.

"Get assistance. I see lights. The people will soon be here," answered Everard, shivering.

"Here, put my shawl over the lady," said Rebecca, taking it off and wrapping it around the unconscious woman.

"And mine, too," added Mary. "Cover her up with the shawls; help is coming."

Everard turned his head.

"Father! Amelia!" cried Alice Hill, who was followed by Bennett, "answer me."

The carriage, physicians and help arriving, Bennett said to Alice, "You go with Amelia; I shall go in the conveyance with your father."

"You are so wet, Charlie. I am afraid you will take cold," returned Alice, a little confused by the shock.

"I am afraid so myself," answered Bennett, "but it can't be helped."

"Miss Hill," said Rebecca, "I would like to go with you. I may be of some service until your friends come."

"Yes, yes," said Alice.

"I shall come, too," added Mary, "I am a good nurse."

"Here, Everard, is your coat. Your bath has chilled you. How plucky you are; saved two lives. The papers will be full of it. If I had done that it would have brought me lots of customers, though were it to save my own life and Rebecca's, I could not have swam," said Berkhoff.

"Berkhoff, I must go up to the Hills' yet to-night."

"Are you mad, Everard? No, you don't do nothing of the sort. Your teeth are chattering. You are going to bed, and I am going to stay with you to-night."

"I am not ill, Berkhoff, only cold," said Everard, as his face flushed and paled alternately. "I must go to the Hills. Miss Hill and her father may be dead," and his voice trembled.

"I think not; I hope not. The father is not strong, but the young lady is. You have been overheated dancing, and the bath you had was not good for you. I'll inquire about them for you. Don't be stubborn," begged Berkhoff.

"The horses have stopped at the hotel. If you don't tell the driver to go to the Hills' I shall walk there," said Everard, firmly.

"What's this? This is indeed madness," groaned Berkhoff.

"I care not what it is; take me there," and Everard put his hands to his face.

"To the Hills', driver," said Berkhoff, putting his head out of the window. "You are crazy, and I must humor you."

"How are they?" inquired Everard, as the door of the Hill mansion was opened by a servant.

"Miss Amelia has recovered somewhat, but the doctors say she must keep quiet. Mr. Hill is still in a faint; I shouldn't wonder if it is the old disease—paralysis again."

"Take up this card in the morning. Say I called last night. Don't forget," continued Everard.

"Come on," shouted Berkhoff. "Are you going to stand there talking all night? Fool, fool," he murmured between his teeth.

When the other picnickers arrived at the landing, they were told of the accident, and all spoke in the highest terms of Everard's bravery.

"If we were superstitious like the ancients," said Benson, "we might think that the Gods were

angry at our enjoying ourselves on the feast of the Lemuria."

After the young ladies were taken to their homes, the gentlemen went in a body to inquire about the Hills.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Thank God, papa is quite out of danger. Dr. Wilson says all he requires is careful nursing, and that it was the fright that gave him the second attack of paralysis. You and papa had a narrow escape, Amelia," said Alice Hill.

"Yes," returned Amelia, shuddering; "now that father is comfortable, tell me all about it. I know Everard saved our lives," and she closed her eyes.

"You remember father said he felt dizzy. Well, naturally, all of us forgot everything and turned to him. As the weight all went to one side, the little concern gave a lurch and over we went."

"And I lost consciousness the moment the boat capsized," cried Amelia.

"And I held on to the seat of that frail boat with the energy of despair, and behold you, when it turned right side up again," said Alice, laughing, "there I was safe. Of course, I was wet through and through, but even when I came home no one noticed it in the excitement. I sent Peter for Charlie's things, and as soon as you opened your eyes ran off, changed my clothes and had some hot coffee."

"Very sensible. Go on. I have not heard how I was rescued."

"I was just coming to that. But, Amelia, I must say I think I was very selfish, very wicked, that night."

"I don't see how you had time for wickedness, Alice."

"Because," returned she, "in that instant of extreme despair I thought of myself. My hands clutched the boat, to save whom? Father or sister? No, but to save myself," and her fair face crimsoned with self-condemnation.

"Don't trouble yourself, dear Alice, about that. Self-preservation is an instinct. Undoubtedly in that moment of dire emergency you lost your presence of mind and did what your sister Amelia would have done under the same circumstances."

"Is that so? I feel better then."

"Go on, I am waiting," said Amelia, a little impatiently.

"I screamed and saw a man jump out of a boat near us, to catch you as you came up to the surface and take you to land. I screamed again, for there was Charlie holding on to father, struggling with all his might. With that dead weight he could not hold out; for he had either to let father go or be drowned. That man jumped in the water again, carried father to the land, and Charlie came back to me in the boat. It was fortunate that we were not far out in the stream."

"But the man was——"

"Mark Everard, as you know, Amelia. He has been very ill, but is in his office again. He was coming from a picnic and was overheated."

"I did not know that, Alice. How long since that occurred? I am a little confused yet."

"Five days ago."

"So you have made inquiries, have you?"

"To be sure I have, Amelia. I sent there daily. Did he not come up and inquire for you the very same night of the accident, all wet and ill as he was?"

"Not for me alone, Alice; but some one must thank him for all this. Father cannot, he is ill. Charlie is not yet one of the family; it would seem ungrateful to send him."

"Charlie of his own accord has been there and thanked him for saving the father and sister of 'his Alice,' " and she blushed.

"Well, then, Alice, you must go."

"Indeed, I slipped away myself yesterday, taking Mrs. Whitman with me, and went to see Mr. Everard. Mrs. Silverbaum—you must know she and Mr. Berkhoff have been constantly attending on him—said: 'Would you like to see him, Miss Hill? He is sitting in the arm-chair. He is one grand man.' I answered, 'I should only be too happy to express my thanks personally.'"

"What answer did he return?" said Amelia, eagerly.

"He sent his excuse and regrets, but would not see me. I was never so astonished in my life. He is generally so courteous, so kind in his manners."

"What is to be done?"

"Go to see him yourself, this very day, this very hour," said Alice.

"Do you think I should?"

"Can you do less, Amelia? Is it too much for you to say 'I thank you' with your own lips?"

"Not another word, Alice. I have never swerved from duty, but I would to God that I had not been indebted to Mark Everard for my life."

"Is he not good enough for such a purpose? Does your prejudice outweigh your good sense? Would you have him executed as a Spanish Queen did for a poor subject for touching her?" asked Alice, a little indignantly.

"Alice, I feel miserable to-day, very wretched," and the tears trickled down Amelia's cheeks.

"Are you ill or melancholy? Charlie will be round early this afternoon, and he will not leave you long in the blues," said Alice, affectionately, throwing her arms around her sister's neck and repeatedly kissing her.

"You feel all right to-day, don't you?" said Berkhoff to Everard, as he came into his office.

"Yes, I feel quite well. To-morrow, please God, I am going to work on my cases. I have been playing invalid long enough. You have been very kind to me; you were up two nights. I raved a little and gave you some trouble, eh?" said Everard.

"Pshaw! if I was sick you would do the same. Has Mrs. Silverbaum been here to-day?"

"Yes; what a good-natured creature she is. Every day she prepares some dainties for me, as if I might starve in the hotel."

"What do you think of Rebecca?" said Berkhoff, bluntly.

"I like her better every day," replied Everard, smiling at such a question. "She has a good heart, and I think you and she are adapted for each other."

"No danger of her throwing off on a man, is there?"

"Why, Berkhoff, I am indignant at such suspicions," said Everard.

"Mark, I love Rebecca. I can't tell you what I would not do for her, but what will she do for me? If ruin, disgrace——"

"What are you talking about?"

"I mean loss of money, loss of name. Will she share those troubles with me?" said Berkhoff excitedly.

"If she is the true-hearted girl I take her to be, she will. But why on earth were you not married long ago?"

"Rebecca has an idea it is more stylish, more American like, to be engaged a long while. Now I shall not marry until I see how I stand."

"Is the crisis—There is some one knocking at the outer door," added Everard.

"It is the cards from the Misses Hill," said Berkhoff, opening the door and taking the cards from the office boy. "They wish to see you. Will you let them in?"

"To be sure," said Everard, turning pale, "let them be admitted."

"I am off, Everard, but have a care. Don't forget your grandfathers."

"Mr. Everard," said Amelia, walking in, "I

have come to express to you the sincerest thanks of my father and myself."

"Pray be seated, ladies. Any one would have done as I did under the same circumstances."

"Our debt of obligation is so great that it can never be repaid. If pecuniary——"

"Miss Hill," said Everard, with flushed face, "I wish no thanks, I deserve none; but do not insult me."

"I beg your pardon; you are too hasty. I was going to say, if pecuniary considerations prompt a service it can be paid, but in cases like the present, the obligation is too heavy to permit any mode of requital. All that my father and I can do is to acknowledge the debt, and I have called on you in his behalf and on my own to do so."

"Miss Hill, if I have been instrumental in doing you a good service, you will best repay me by not mentioning it. How is your father?"

"He is improving nicely, thank you, and is very anxious to see you. He regrets deeply your illness too." Of course Amelia did not know that he had lost two clients.

"Once more I thank you," said she, rising to go. "You will call to see us, will you not?" and her voice was low and vibrating.

"If you invite me, Miss Hill, I shall certainly," replied Everard with beaming face.

"You will always be welcome," answered Amelia, bending her head. "Good-bye," and she extended her hand to him. "How your hands tremble. You are still weak. Take care of yourself."

"I shall soon be well and strong," returned Everard.

For once Alice found herself in the street with her sister without having said a word.

"Ah!" said Rebecca, coming in with her mother, "you have had company. I declare I have never seen you look so happy."

"I have just been thinking over something which made me smile," said Everard.

"Yes; Miss Hill is getting gracious. She and her sister met us in the hall and she condescended to let that haughty head incline the least bit. I hate such pride and such prejudices as she possesses," and Rebecca gave her head a toss and sat down in the chair with such force that every hinge creaked.

"I like the other one much better, Miss Alice; she laughs and she is good. This one I don't like. Why didn't you let the other one in yesterday when she came with her friend?" said Mrs. Silverbaum.

"Because my head ached. Miss Amelia is so gentle, so kind; you do not know her."

"Maybe not. What an admirable nurse she is," said Rebecca, "only——"

"Only not for *us*."

"I think she would not let us suffer," said Everard, warmly. "I think women, all women, no matter what their cast, creed or color, capable of making great sacrifices."

"Yes, when they are in love," added Rebecca.

"Yes; they are all in love at one time or other," said Everard, laughing.

"What more can a man want than the love of

a noble, tender-hearted woman, who will sympathize with him in trouble, and bravely confront loss and ruin for his sake?" and he looked at Rebecca solemnly.

"Rebecca's heart is a gold mine," said Mrs. Silverbaum. "She don't care for nothing but Berkhoff."

"Thank God, though, he is all right," returned Rebecca. "We are going to Letitia Rheinberg's party to-morrow night. Berkhoff is going to bring me a diamond locket this evening. I am afraid I shall cut a sorry figure by the side of Grace Feld."

"Mr. Lavalie is a millionaire," said Everard.

"Well, who cares whether he is or not?"

"Certainly not, Miss Rebecca. But his intended should outstrip every one there; he is the only millionaire in town," said Everard.

"Mr. Everard, Mr. Berkhoff may advise me in regard to money matters, but——"

"Rebecca, Rebecca," spoke Mrs. Silverbaum, "Mr. Everard means nothing. He is good."

"Your mother is right, Miss Rebecca. I am your friend. I was talking as I might have spoken to a sister," added Everard, soothingly, but he was well aware now that Berkhoff was standing on treacherous ground.

"Of course you are my friend. Ma, come, I want to buy some things yet this afternoon," said Rebecca.

The evening of the party for which Letitia labored so much finally arrived. Many invitations were issued, and the attendance was expected to

be large. Letitia felt like a brave general going to battle, determined to conquer or die.

Mr. Rheinberg's house was a comfortable-looking two-story frame building, with large, airy rooms. A veranda, around which twined the large flowered clematis, surrounded the house. The garden was small for a country one, but regularly and artistically laid out. Everything was executed under the supervision of Letitia's picturesque eye, sometimes by her exquisite hand. The rear fences were covered with gooseberry and raspberry bushes; in the front garden stood two large mulberry trees, which produced luscious berries and threw their cooling shade over the front of the house and over many tender plants, whose delicate corollas would otherwise have shriveled during summer under the scorching sun. Arbor vitae, being indigenous to the climate, grew luxuriantly along the fence.

Letitia contrived to have all the trees filled with Chinese lanterns so as to illuminate the garden. It was nearly the old fable of the Frog and the Ox.

"Dear Grace," said Letitia, "how kind of you to come early. Mr. Laval, I shall hand you over to papa for awhile. Come upstairs, Grace, and remove your wraps."

"Why, Grace, your dress takes my breath away. You are decked as if for a royal reception. The pale blue silk is handsome, and this white lace overdress must be worth a fortune, not to talk of the diamond solitaires in your ears and the diamonds and pearls encircling your

wrists. Did you ever see the like?" fairly screamed Letitia, "a fan covered with Brussels lace, with a gemmed handle, and a comb set with brilliants. Your lace handkerchief is so fine that spiders might have woven it."

"You see these ropes of pearls? William gave them to me yesterday. I believe he sends an order every day to New York for something new. He must be as rich as Croesus."

"A regular fairy princess, you are," and Letitia bit her lips enviously.

"Let me see you, Letitia dear. Your white muslin seems molded to your perfect figure. I like dresses made décolleté and short sleeves, but William says they are abominable. Your hair done up in a coil becomes you well. You look beautiful, but you wear no jewelry."

"One red rose is enough for me," said Letitia, proudly. "Come, let us go into the parlor."

In a short time the house was crowded. On all sides was heard: "How elegant Miss Feld looks. What gorgeous dressing! Those resplendent jewels are worth a fortune; an empress might wear them." Again: "How plainly, but attractively, Miss Rheinberg is attired. How transcendently lovely. What a picture!" Some of the admiring guests said: "She does not walk, she floats. Her breath is perfume, when she treads she seems to scatter flowers!"

"Glad to see you here, Everard," said Berkhoff. "You are looking well, I tell you."

"I have just come for a little while, merely as a spectator, and it is worth my time I see."

"Everard, ain't you going to dance with Miss

Rheinberg? You may depend upon it, she is a magnificent woman. Look at those arms, man; neither nature nor sculptor ever made more perfect ones."

"Berkhoff, I see the dimples in her elbow playing 'hide and seek'—she takes very good care that I shall observe her long, graceful neck and symmetrical shoulders. What then?" returned Everard.

"Because she is just the girl for you; you and she would make a fine looking couple."

"Do not trouble yourself to pair me. I am doing very well at present, but when I do marry, the girl must have more to recommend her than physical attractions. What drew you, Berkhoff, to Rebecca?"

"I don't know exactly. You know she is healthy and lively, but I can't say I want her for either of these things. She is in some way necessary to my happiness."

"Berkhoff, I tell you whenever I see a girl who is necessary for my happiness, and I can win her, I shall. That will be doing as you did," laughed Everard.

"Yes, but let me tell you I looked that everything was all right. You may not see straight, you may become blind."

"I am not aware," answered Everard, coldly, "of any defect in my vision. Until I do, I shall not require the aid of an oculist."

"Take advice in time," said Berkhoff, eagerly, "it may be only a little spot now; it can be cut out."

"You forget yourself, Mr. Berkhoff. But if

this is the way I am to become blind, then welcome blindness. Well, Miss Rebecca, are you coming to join us?" said Everard, as she approached with Mr. Atherton.

"Yes, I have been dancing with Mr. Atherton, and asked him to bring me here. A nice thing that I have to look for you, Berkhoff," said Rebecca, poutingly.

"I am sorry to leave you, but duty calls," added Atherton gayly, as the music struck up.

"I was just having a little talk with Everard," said Berkhoff.

"Indeed, Mr. Everard, I think these heated rooms will do you no good," rejoined Rebecca, considerably.

"I shall not remain long. How divinely Miss Rheinberg waltzes?"

"Everybody is in raptures over that girl. I don't see where her great beauty comes in," continued Rebecca, turning up her nose.

"She is grand, Rebecca. You see she dresses plainly," and Berkhoff looked pleadingly into her eyes.

"She is dressed with Arcadian simplicity," said Everard.

"You mean with affected simplicity. She is dressed for effect. As she cannot come out in the splendid attire of her cousin, she would fain make people believe that she disdains all finery. Oh, I know her tricks, the artful thing. Look at her dancing with Lavalle, with her half-laughing, half-languishing ways. She is detestable, that's what she is!" snapped Rebecca.

"My dear Rebecca, don't you see she is very

handsome; just suits Everard," said Berkhoff, winking hard to make her understand his desires.

Rebecca not being of the temperament to tamely listen to the praise of another girl, would not comprehend. "Handsome! she is an envious thing, a burning volcano, as dangerous as Aetna or Stromboli," said Rebecca, fiercely.

"Maybe those ladies were not as bad as you think they were. Where do they live, my dear. I think you are too hard," replied Berkhoff.

"My friend," said Rebecca, "you must excuse me, but you are a fool."

"Aha!" returned Everard, convulsed with laughter, "where is the charming Miss Rebecca now?"

Though Lavalley had been often brought into close association with Letitia, he had always regarded her with utter indifference. On this evening she had an undefinable attraction for him. When she brought the powerful magnetism of her eyes to bear on him, which she had previously endeavored in vain to do, he felt as if a current of electricity had thrilled his frame. He could not evade the glittering eyes, which drew and held him with such snake-like power.

"How lovely Letitia looks," said Grace to Lavalley.

"Pretty enough," answered he with a fluttering heart.

"You tremble. Your arm weakens under this load of splendor, with which I have adorned myself to gratify you."

"You, dearest, are no weight. You strengthen me and my heart is cheered by your presence.

While you are with me I cannot be weak," replied Lavalley, with all the inconsistency of man, and with a sickly smile.

"You know," said Grace sweetly, "I arrayed myself like a queen to please you. Whatever pleases you, pleases me."

"You are a darling," said he aloud, but mentally he exclaimed: "How tiresome that eternal 'everything for you.' Grace lacks vivacity and warmth of feeling. Her inspidity reacts upon me." "This was Tenderden steeple being the cause of Goodwin sands."

"Miss Feld, I am in your care for this dance," said Mr. Benson.

"Dear me, let me see; so you are."

"I shall get another partner, Grace," said Lavalley, and he immediately sought Letitia. "Miss Letitia, shall we dance or walk?"

"Walk, if you please. I am almost exhausted from dancing; walking will rest me," and Letitia cast upon him her luminous eyes.

"When I am with you I am in the zenith of my heaven," said Lavalley, while his sense of honor made him feel as if he were in the nadir.

"You can have no heaven away from Grace. It would be wrong," answered she with affected indignation.

"Who is to blame? Your wondrous beauty leads me astray. I cannot, like Ulysses, antidote myself against your spells."

"I am no Circe," said Letitia, frigidly.

"Have you not metamorphosed me from a most devoted lover into a most despicable man;

making me a recreant to a love that I myself nursed into life?" asked Lavallo, vehemently.

"Well, am I to blame?" said Letitia, soothingly. "What have I said or done to cause this?" and false tears came to her eyes.

"Do not make me frantic. Let us dance," and Lavallo threw himself into the waltz with a sort of reckless joy.

When the festivities terminated, Letitia mused: "He is irrevocably lost. Awake, my dream is to be realized. I shall yet snatch him from the altar. My star is in the ascendant, while Grace's is waning."

William Lavallo went from the party to his hotel, restless; his soul filled with tribulation. He could not brook his own fickleness. While passion declared for freedom and the breaking of his vows, conscience, indignant and threatening, would not sanction such desecration. To Grace belonged the shrine of his heart, the incense he would pour to a strange deity, and all that was best in his heart rose in revolt against his budding disloyalty. When once the germs of evil are sown, who can predict the result of the contest?

"I know I must have disturbed you calling so early, Grace," said Lavallo next morning, "but I have scarcely slept since I left you last night."

"Are you sick?" anxiously inquired Grace, her blue eyes filling with tears.

"No, not exactly, dear; but disturbed about you."

"About me! Why should you be? I am well

and happy in your love, thank God; what more can I want?" said Grace tenderly.

"And that love you shall have," added Lavalley ardently.

"I hope I shall never live to doubt it. How glad I am," she said suddenly, "that you never met Letitia before we were engaged."

"Why, what difference would that make?"

"Because, William, she is so handsome. Everybody was whispering about her beauty last night. Then I thanked God that you were engaged to me, and that no one could invade my rights," said Grace, with heightened color.

"Why, you are not afraid of Letitia, are you, Grace?"

"Don't misjudge me. My confidence in her is as great as in you. My own cousin! We have been almost inseparable companions, and my prayer is that she will soon be as happy as I am."

"Dear Grace, you are a seraph. The sun and stars will cease to shine ere I love another!" said Lavalley, forgetting his tumultuous fluctuations of the preceding night.

"I shall protest, too," laughed Grace. "The Ethiopian shall change his skin, the earth stand still——"

"Stop, my dear. I must put your love to the test. Grace, darling, I think it is time to reward my patience. I want to claim my wife."

"When you will," answered she, laying her blushing face on his shoulder.

"It shall be soon then. Let us seal it with a kiss," said Lavalley, kissing her rapturously.

"Kisses are to man what nectar and ambrosia are to the gods. The very air is redolent with the perfume of our love. I am the bee that sips from the sweet mignonette all its sweetness."

"Are you all deaf in here?" said Mrs. Feld, coming in laughing. "The bell has rung three times for lunch."

"Is it luncheon time? I am sure I am not hungry," returned Lavalley, endeavoring not to change color.

"Nor I either. I just ate my breakfast a little while ago," added Grace, apologetically.

"I ordered a very nice lunch," said Mrs. Feld.

"Well if you have something very appetizing we shall do justice to it. We must try and do our best," whispered Lavalley to Grace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Well, Grace," said Lavalley, "there is to be a lecture this evening, one of the series 'On the Exploration of the North Pole,' By Bernard Arnold. We must go."

"Is he a Jew?"

"Yes, dear. In our day the influence of the Jew is as perceptible in the halls of learning and science as in the gold market. In towns like this, everything is slow, the people adhere longer to old prejudices, and I fear Arnold will not have much success."

"William, will you take Letitia with us to the lecture? We can step in for her. She will be ready in a moment," said Grace, on the evening of Arnold's lecture.

"Grace, dear, it is much nicer to go alone. I prefer to be alone with you," answered Lavalley, anxious to avoid Letitia.

"Dear William, of the fullness of my happiness, I should like Letitia to share. Business is a little pressing now, and uncle cannot think of leaving the store. I should like her to come, but I don't wish to displease you."

"Anything to please you, darling. Let her come with us. We shall call for her," said Lavalley, though he would rather have shunned the danger than braved it.

"How kind of you all," said Letitia. "I should have moped all night if you had not come for me. I fear two women will be a burden to you, Mr. Lavallo. It is more than you bargained for," and she gave a low, silvery laugh, which sounded on his ear like the musical cadence of a murmuring brook.

"I wonder," said Lavallo, looking directly at Grace, but feeling himself under the fascination of Letitia, "what possessed Arnold to advertise in so grandiloquent a style as 'The matchless eloquence of the most renowned orator of modern times'? I hate suchrodomontade."

"Do you think he will have a full house?" inquired Grace.

"I think he will, for many will go out of curiosity," added Letitia.

"Take care," said Lavallo, "don't stumble going up these steps. I dare say we shall have some light in the hall."

"Yes, it is better here. A fair audience, too. There is Mark Anthony Everard. Do I see aright? There sit Amelia and Alice Hill, also Mr. Bennett. What could have induced Amelia Hill to come to hear a Jew speak?" added Letitia.

"I suppose she is becoming interested in Jews. No doubt she expects to be amused," returned Lavallo.

"Yes; but what surprises me is that she comes even for that. No Christian family in town have kept themselves so aloof from all intercourse with the Jews here as the Hills. Alice is good-natured, they say, but Amelia is especially bitter," rejoined Letitia.

"I know Alice is good, and Amelia must be so too. She nursed the sick during the cholera. That is evidence enough," said Grace.

"Yes, that shows of what stuff she is made," returned Lavallo.

"No doubt she is good to her own class. She thinks probably if she associated with us she would take a spasm and die. Let us hear what Mr. Arnold has to say," added Letitia.

The lecturer, a dark, handsome-looking man, spoke eloquently on his theme, and transported his audience to regions of perpetual ice and snow, where our coldest winter would be warm and genial.

"How did you like it?" said Letitia after Arnold had concluded.

"I think it was very good. I am afraid if all their efforts since 1830 to find an open polar sea they have not succeeded they never will," said Grace.

"You are too easily discouraged, Grace. As you have heard, it has been the dream of explorers for centuries, and will be till they succeed. But of the utility of such a discovery we may well doubt. Imagine a place where birds cannot live, where chloric ether freezes and where the respiration becomes sharp and pungent?" rejoined Lavallo.

"It makes me cold to think of it. I feel already as if I needed a ball or two of fat, with some walrus liver and seal as dessert, to heat me up," said Letitia, laughingly.

"I shall be compelled to deny you those dainties at present," but in a serious tone Lavallo

continued: "The goodness of God is seen everywhere, for even in those regions He provides for man. Both the land and the sea contribute food, clothing and fuel."

"Would you like to go there, Mr. Lavalley?" inquired Letitia.

"No, no, my ambition does not extend so far. I would not, even in the interest of science, brave the dangers and hardships incidental to a cruise to the North Pole."

"You will be no martyr to science, then?" said Letitia.

"No," responded Lavalley, "I shall be a martyr only to love," and he glanced at Grace and then at her cousin.

"Man is made to love," answered Letitia, with a captivating smile.

"Did not Arnold illustrate it in the example of Captain Tyson, who, feeling the want of something to pet, took in his arms a pretty young seal in lieu of a baby?"

"How cruel of the whaler to kill it," said Grace, piteously. "I do not wonder at the Captain feeling indignant over it. How much the lecturer has shown us."

Letitia, whose mind was bent upon a more important conquest than knowledge, insinuatingly remarked, "I know one man in town who could handle that subject better than Arnold."

Now if there was one weak spot in the composition of Lavalley—and who has not one at least?—it was the pride of knowledge. On this supposition Letitia took her cue and plied it well.

"Good-night, Grace," said Letitia, kissing her.

"I know mother will be down when she hears the gate click. She always waits for me when I am out."

Letitia, like a Borgia, could poison her cousin with a kiss. Ties of blood, years of companionship, many acts of kindness and love, were all swept away by an inordinate desire for wealth, ambition and feminine envy.

Bernard Arnold was one of those fascinating men whom nature had endowed with considerable gifts. Oratory was his forte. No impediments had he, like the great Greek, to overcome. It might be said:

"His talk is like a stream that runs
With rapid change from rocks to roses;
It slips from politics to puns—
It glides from Mahomet to Moses."

But in spite of his superior talents, his morals were bad, his passions were uncontrollable, and he was a gambler of a bad type. His profession as a lecturer, however, opened many doors, and made Mrs. Feld's home accessible to him.

"Miss Feld," said Arnold, calling at her home several weeks after his first lecture, "I am delighted to find you at home, and for once alone."

"Indeed, I think it should be quite indifferent to you how you found me."

"I am indifferent to nothing that concerns you, dear Grace."

"Miss Feld, sir, if you please," returned Grace, with dignity.

"You must give me the privilege of calling you, Grace. Grace," said Arnold to the astonished girl, "you must listen to my cry of ardent love, of eager longing to call you my own."

"Do you not know," answered Grace, as she drew back in alarm, "that I am engaged to Mr. Lavallo? Love from another in my position is an insult."

"What care I for that? These longings of my heart will not be repressed. You cannot be so cold as not to let them find an echo in your heart. Say you will be mine, and I shall scout a thousand frigid lovers like Lavallo."

"I scorn you and your love," said Grace, contemptuously. "Mr. Arnold, will you leave, or shall I be under the necessity of ordering you from the house?" and she put her hand on the button.

"Yes, Miss Feld," returned Arnold, turning purple with suppressed anger, "I shall leave, but I *shall* return. I am an Indian in temper and never forgive. Good-day."

No sooner had Arnold departed than Grace's factitious strength gave way, and she sank sobbing into a chair. "If I were to tell Lavallo of this," she cried, "he would think I encouraged him in some way or other. I cannot inform my parents, bowed down as they are with trouble, so I shall keep this ugly incident locked in my own breast. I need not fear his threats; they are only the rage of a baffled villain."

CHAPTER XIX.

Sorrow and discontent sat on the brow of Mr. Feld. He was no longer the handsome, genial, light-hearted man of yore. His brow was corrugated, his eyes bloodshot, his cheeks sunken, his nose red, and his lips tremulous—an indication of weakness. He was now an inveterate gamester. He also drank again to excess, and would lie when intoxicated in a heavy sleep for hours. The debauch overcome, he would meet the mortified and repugnant looks of his wife only with fierce and angry scowls. The humbled, tender and half reproachful gaze of Grace would indeed move his heart and make him often mentally vow "Never to touch another drop," but these worthy resolutions were invariably broken.

"Well, Ruth," said Mr. Feld to his wife, "why do you not hurry up this wedding?"

"How can I? I do all in my power to bring matters to a point, but nothing works."

"Nothing works," said Mr. Feld, his passion rising, "everything works against me. My business is ruined—Berkhoff did that. The property I bought is poorly located, and the house over our heads is mortgaged. Bankruptcy is staring me in the face. Do you know that?"

"Berkhoff never ruined you. Your terrible, vicious habits, drinking, gambling, did that. The devil pulled you down."

"I say he did ruin trade; he forces everything and so do you. You drive a man down, down to——"

"Henry, have I not coaxed you, begged you, prayed of you to change your habits? What good has it done?" said Mrs. Feld, weeping and rocking herself to and fro. "You have soured my temper in making me miserable. Because Berkhoff attends to business and thrives, you say he ruined you."

"Never mind him, he must fail sooner or later. As for Grace, I will go after Lavalie and tell him he must marry her at once. It is time, I am sure. Is this thing to go on forever? You women always do things by halves."

"It is such a delicate matter that I cannot talk to him about it. I wish I could."

"Dry your tears, Ruth. He don't come, so I will go after him," and with this fixed purpose in view, he slouched on his hat and went into the street.

"Hello!" said Bernard Arnold, "where are you going?"

"Nowhere in particular," answered Mr. Feld.

"Come with me then," continued Arnold, locking his arm in Feld's; "let us have a toss up at the cards."

"All right." Mr. Feld, with distended vision, saw luck smiling upon him, canceling mortgages and restraining the thunderbolt which was ready to strike. He played lightly, he won; more heavily, he won; but when the stakes were quadrupled he lost. Again and again he lost, and before he could realize his altered position he had given

his note for twenty thousand dollars, payable in three days.

Mr. Feld rose from the table not only a ruined man, but a thoroughly desperate one; an Orestes in wrath, but not in righteousness. He staggered to the door in a kind of wild blindness, left the den and rushed off, he knew not, cared not, whither. Whence was his redemption to come? from heaven or hell? His triumphant opponent watched him with malignant, exultant joy. His eyes gleamed with a savage light and he muttered crossly. "Now for my revenge, sweet revenge. I will now make this girl throw aside her rich, haughty lover and force her to wed the adventurer. Ah! my charming Grace, twenty thousand dollars shall you bring with you. A very good dowry, and a very acceptable one, too."

This was one of the many instances where the insulter thinks himself insulted and thirsts for vengeance.

The last ray of the setting sun streaked the window of Grace's chamber with a gold and purple light. She sat and bathed in his departing glory, till twilight tinged each object with somber gray. The despair that had crept over her during the day began to dissolve in the hope that night's shadow would soon cause her lover to appear.

Grace attired herself with unusual care, and said aloud, "He will soon be here." A restlessness caused her to walk towards the window, look wistfully out of it, then turn back and pause before the mirror. "Ah, my toilette is not com-

plete. I must wear my diamonds this evening. How absent minded I am. Once William said I should be his queen and that I should always dress like one. That was some weeks ago. How long it seems. A century to me. Oh!" and she uttered a deep-drawn sigh. "I shall put on my dazzling ornaments," and the action followed the words. "Ah, they do indeed look beautiful, but my heart is no lighter than before. Though I look more queenly, I am not happier. I know not whether it is presentment or fear, but a darkness hovers around me that obscures my sight. I am weak," and she sat down trembling and overcome with emotion.

The firmament, studded with myriads of brilliants, those "forget-me-nots of the heavens," glimmered and twinkled unmindful of man's woes. The heavenly hosts have no sympathy with human weakness and littleness. Vain mortals hide your pride. Each glittering star in the blue vault, each tree, each flower, admonishes us as with the small, still voice of their Master, "Man, thou art nothing. Weigh well each passing hour and let it record for thee a good deed before it has fled."

"I shall go to mother," resumed Grace, with half-opened eyes, "who, though herself oppressed with care, may relieve mine."

Mother! the holiest, sweetest and most unselfish being under the sun. Woman, once a mother, is a metamorphosed being. What concentration of tenderness, self-abnegation and Divine love cluster around the sacred name of Mother.

As Grace rose from her seat to seek her parents, there was a slow, noiseless tread on the carpeted hall, the door turned slowly on its hinges; she rushed forward, exclaiming, "William, at last you are here." Then "Father, is it you?" and she met the upturned, sad gaze of her father.

"My child," said Mr. Feld, with wild and haggard looks, "can't you tell my steps from your lover's?"

"Father, what is the matter with you? I entreat you to tell me. You are trembling," and Grace laid her head on his shoulder. "I know something must have happened. Your voice, your action, speaks despair."

"Nothing is the matter, child. I was looking for your mother. She was not in her room, and I thought she might be here. But, child, does William Lavalley stay away so late now? Nothing could have kept me from my Ruth in the days of my courtship."

Grace hung her head in confusion, and unbidden tears stole down her cheeks.

Those tears smote Mr. Feld more than the heaviest blows would have done. In the midst of overwhelming anxieties and sorrows, he never dreamed that Lavalley might waver in his love.

"Poor little Grace, my Grace," her father murmured as he patted her little hands.

That burst of affection caused the sobs to rise in her throat; she longed to throw herself in her father's arms and weep unrestrainedly on his bosom.

"Father!"

"Grace!" said he, with a sudden motion and a peculiar flash of his eyes.

Grace turned from her father and walked to the window for air. As she turned the light shone on her jewels, rendering them more magnificent than they had before appeared to him. The gems, with their thousand brilliant gleamings, now matured a thought which a moment previous had but germinated. A golden apple hung before Mr. Feld. He abruptly left the room and went to his wife's apartment. Mrs. Feld, who was now there, said in a sharp voice, "What did Lavalley say?"

Mr. Feld threw himself into the chair without uttering a syllable.

"Where have you been, you miserable man?" resumed Mrs. Feld, scrutinizing his trembling figure and dejected countenance.

"Spare me," answered the once strong man, now depressed and humiliated by drink and gambling. "Ruth, what you have so long prophesied has come to pass. We are ruined; there is nothing left me but to die."

That voice, so tender, so low, so full of despair, struck on her heart like a chant of the dead. Its pathos recalled the happy hours of her youth, when he stood beside her in his manly beauty and vowed to love, cherish and protect her. Those sweet and charming words, so dear to woman's heart, and for which her soul thirsted, were now recalled.

"My heart breaks when I think of the past," said Mrs. Feld, putting her face to his and throwing her arms around his neck.

"Dear Ruth, don't cry. Your tenderness makes my heart soft and my eyes overflow," and their tears mingled together. "Ruth, be quiet," said Mr. Feld, after his own emotion had subsided. "I will tell you all," and he related simply the predicament in which he was placed.

"Can you not borrow? Where are your friends? They must, they will, save you," returned Mrs. Feld, wildly.

"I am already in debt a few hundred to your brother, a large sum for him. I have so overdrawn in the bank that I am afraid to show my face there. I cannot raise another dollar on my property. Everything is mortgaged at twice its value. As for friends, they, like swallows, fly when winter comes, and what is poverty but winter. Some of my friends, knowing that trouble is ahead, look at me coldly, nod to me distantly. Their liking 'for the jolly good fellow' has gone. The breath of summer the winter freezes. I feel that icy touch now; it will kill me."

"Heavens, it must not be. I will pray to God, He will help us. I wish my poor diamonds could save you. What matter to part with those glassy gewgaws? I wish Grace's were mine. How quickly would you be free from this terrible debt."

"Who said I should take the diamonds, ruin my child to save my honor?" asked Mr. Feld, hoarsely, pacing up and down with rapid strides.

"No one," said Mrs. Feld, looking up in astonishment.

"But, Ruth, if the jewels of Grace were turned into money, I could at least pay Arnold. He

may not trouble me, press me, I mean, but it is a peculiar kind of debt, a debt of honor, and oh, that note! if he holds it over my head what shall I do? Those diamonds haunt me," and Mr. Feld pressed his hands to his temples and groaned.

"You would not," returned his wife, "make Grace miserable. William might miss the diamonds, then what?"

"True, Ruth, true. I will not make her unhappy again. I tore her away from one man, or you did that; she now loves Lavalley with her whole heart. I would not be so cruel. I could not. But what a free man that would make me! Having escaped from such a danger, I could try, I would, so help me God, I should try to be a new man. Ruth, help me," and he stamped his feet and reached out his arms in the helplessness of his conflicting emotions.

"There is no way," moaned Mrs. Feld.

"You forget the diamonds," gasped Mr. Feld. "Lavalley might not miss them until he is married, and then he could not go back."

"But Grace would be miserable. You know her truthful nature."

"And she might not consent to do it, easy-natured as she is. Let me be dishonored rather than destroy her happiness," continued Mr. Feld. "The diamonds are but mockers, tempters to drag me down. I will not think of them."

"Think, Henry, only of our darling Grace."

A different scene was transpiring in the parlor. It was quite late before Lavalley came to see Grace. She no sooner heard him coming up the

walk than she flew to the door, her dress of fine silk rustling as she ran.

"Aha! you anticipated my coming, I see," said Lavalle, as Grace opened the door before his hand touched the bell.

"What has kept you so long? Have you been ill? I have been very anxious. Why do you now always come so late? Your face looks flushed. What is the matter with you?" said Grace, flooding him with questions and not waiting for answers.

"What should be the matter?" replied Lavalle, blushing and paling alternately. "A business letter of importance detained me this evening. My affairs were no sooner attended to, than I flew on the wings of the wind to be with you," and he kissed her as tenderly as if his words were truth, though his heart quailed at the deception.

"Have you nothing else to say about it?" asked Grace.

"Nothing, but that I love you."

"I hope so," responded Grace, innocently. "Is my attire in good taste to-night? You know you always say, 'For my sake exercise your faculty in discerning what is beautiful in dress,' and so I try my best to please you."

"You look beautiful."

"But, William, these diamonds have become hateful to me, because I put them on expressly for you, and I do believe they keep you away. Really, I don't care for them half as much as before. Some stones keep away evil spirits; diamonds, I think, have the fatality to keep away

good ones," and Grace looked playfully at Lavalley.

"Charmer, diamonds are for dark complexions and pearls for fair ones."

"Indeed! to punish you, I shall not wear the diamonds again until we are married," said Grace, blushing with confusion at the words inadvertently spoken, and to cover them, continued, "Diamonds become the dark; Letitia is dark, then they should become her."

"I did not say that," and Lavalley's face reddened as his guilty thoughts reverted to the siren who had detained him that and so many evenings, and made him a traitor and a hypocrite. With a smile he resumed, "Diamonds are pretty for some occasions, other jewels or no jewels at times look as well."

"You are becoming Arcadian in your tastes. At all events you are punished," retorted Grace, whose pride was touched.

"I submit, on condition that you will not be anxious about me when I am not here to the moment. I have not seen your father to-day, Grace, though I have passed his place of business several times; but I did see your distinguished looking orator," said Lavalley, half mockingly. He seemed flushed with triumph and excitement. "Do you know, I had at first an entirely different opinion of that man. He has ways about him that I detest. He boards at my hotel, so I learn many things which are not to his credit. Does he ever come here?" and he fixed his dark eyes searchingly upon her face.

Grace grew pale, prevaricated, but finally said, "He has called to see father several times."

"I tell you," returned Lavalley, earnestly, "let your father beware of Arnold; for he is a gambler of the vilest character."

Grace turned a shade paler. Her father's harassed face, with its unutterable despair, rose before her. His significant look at her diamonds made her tremble lest he was already undone.

Grace had a presentiment it would be with her as with the man who ran through the streets of Jerusalem crying, "Woe unto Jerusalem, woe, woe unto others," and when at last a ball struck him, he cried, "Woe unto myself." So she moaned, "Woe for my father, woe for my mother, woe for myself."

When Lavalley had taken leave of Grace, she ran to her mother's room and tried the door gently; it yielded to her touch. Mrs. Feld was sitting in the dark, absorbed in her own thoughts. She did not hear her daughter enter, and just then muttered, "I would to God Grace's diamonds were mine!"

Grace waited to hear no more, but fled in terror to her room, bolted the door and hastily tore the diamonds from her person. Trouble had come, the diamonds could save.

"What shall I do in this dilemma?" sobbed Grace. "I shall throw myself on the generosity of William. He is as rich as a Maharaja, noble-hearted, magnanimous, and he will come to the rescue. But, oh," and a pang of jealousy shot through her heart, "a suppliant now, when his love appears to be waning, is too much. Am I

to be supplanted by another? Letitia is dark, I am fair. Am I not destined for happiness? Will something occur to blight my second love? Religion, with her unpitying hand, crushed out the first, now fatality threatens to rob me of the second. I cannot struggle against wind and tide. Sister Louise said, 'When all forsake thee, turn unto God.' I shall be nearer heaven then."

Wearied with her torturing reflections, Grace went to bed and fell into a troubled sleep, from which she awoke with a start. She had dreamt that she had committed some fearful crime, and been condemned to perpetual banishment to a solitary island, where serpents and wild animals lived. To add to her misery, through some inexplicable means, what she dreaded most had come to pass; she had become Arnold's wife!

Rauch tells us that in dreams both persons and things have a kind of ubiquity, and that in the twinkling of an eye we can skim continents. Naturally, for imagination travels where it will with the speed of light.

CHAPTER XX.

Aurora, goddess of the day, ushered in the morning, streaking mansion and cot with a russet light. Even to the most despairing will her breath and tints quicken a pulse of life and hope. The youth of each day shadows for us the joy of the primeval earth, where the hearts of all animated beings shall bound, free forever from the curse of pain and death.

A few mornings after Lavalley had warned Grace in regard to Arnold, when the sun was high on the horizon, she dressed hurriedly and went to breakfast. Her parents already having taken their morning meal, she hastily drank a cup of coffee, leaving untouched the many delicacies that were put before her. She went into the hall, and in passing the library (the door of which was closed) her attention was arrested by the sound of loud voices within. She heard her father in a quivering voice say, "Never," and then a quiet, malicious response, "You know the consequences," in a voice she recognized as Arnold's.

"Alas!" she mentally said, "William's warning has come too late. Arnold is already imposing conditions; my father is in his talons."

"Mamma," cried Grace, rushing into her mother's room, where Mrs. Feld sat groaning with grief, "what does Arnold want of papa?"

"Child, I am miserable."

"But what can he want?" said Grace, as she encircled her mother in a firm embrace and the tears ran quickly down her cheeks.

Mrs. Feld was on the point of discharging her overburdened heart when the door was thrown open and Mr. Feld entered with a feverish and agitated look, saying: "I am ruined, worse than that, lost. I am a beggar at Arnold's feet. He has no mercy. He will not give me time, only on one condition; but no, not for ten thousand times ten thousand dollars would I consent to it."

"What is it?" asked Grace, with a vague dread.

"My heart beats with anger, my cheeks redden with shame, that I must tell you that dastard's price of my honor."

"Speak, father, I implore you."

"You, you," answered he, fiercely, "are to buy my honor. My child, I am in his power. You, my own child, are to throw off your engaged husband and become his wife. He says he must speak with you alone, the scoundrel."

"Calm yourself, dear father." A half century appeared to have passed over the head of Grace. She thought she was no longer a timid girl, but a resolute woman. "He must yield. Let me speak with this Minotaur, who would devour us."

"No, my poor darling, he shall not eat you up," moaned her mother.

"You are right, go speak to him," rejoined the father. "He would not take my 'no' for an an-

swer. He says you must come and answer for yourself."

"Well, father, I shall go and see what can be done with this revengeful villain."

"Go, my noble child. Of course you will not give up Lavalley, but humor Arnold a little, put him off with kind words, only gain time. Remember," and Mr. Feld looked at her beseechingly, "your father's honor is at stake."

Honor is a precious thing, but Mr. Feld did not seem to comprehend the real import of the word. To be faithful to his promise with his brothers of the gambling fraternity was to him of the first importance—a cardinal virtue. The deferred payment of other just debts did not affect him nearly so deeply.

Grace left the room and approached the library with a firm step, but when her hand touched the doorknob the blood forsook her face and forced itself back to the arteries of her heart, and she was almost compelled to yield to woman's weakness and faint. She persisted and made another ineffectual effort, when it was opened noiselessly from within, and Arnold, calm and imperturbable, stood before her. It had been the boast of his life that he had never seriously undertaken anything without succeeding. And never did he embark in an undertaking more resolutely than in this insane one of making Grace his wife.

"I am under a thousand obligations to you, Miss Feld, for so readily granting me an interview," said Arnold, in a bland voice and the utmost sang-froid. "It is more than I dared hope for. But I have returned according to my prom-

ise," and he compressed his lips, then laughed, and showed his white, gleaming teeth.

"You are here. And I," said Grace, haughtily, forgetting her father's request to be forbearing, "have complied with your incomprehensible, absurd demand."

"Your father, I see, has given you a glimpse of the situation. It is well. I shall now endeavor to make you understand affairs. Throw yourself on my protection, give me the right to call you mine, and all will go well," and Arnold's eye flashed and his dark cheek crimsoned. This gambler, this Lothario, who had broken women's hearts and cast them away, had conceived for Grace a love mixed with hate. This fruit was all the more attractive because it was forbidden. For the moment revenge was forgotten in love. "I love you," resumed he, with quickened breath and dilated eyes, as he approached and attempted to take her hand.

"Beware," returned Grace, starting abruptly and retreating towards the door. "My father is within call."

"Dearest girl, fear no violence. I implore, beseech, entreat you to become mine. You shall never repent it. Every moment of my life shall be dedicated to you. You will be my divinity, for I love you to madness. Tell me what to do for you and I shall do it or die in the attempt. Tell me anything except to leave you."

"Your love," said Grace, shuddering, "is as poisonous as the upas tree. Your language is irrational. I will not listen to it. If that is all

you have to say, I shall go," and she made a movement to the door.

"Stop," replied Arnold, vehemently. "It is not all I have to say. You have heard me only plead, now hear me threaten. What will you say when I tell you that your father's honor is entirely in my hands? Let me but raise my voice and he is besieged with creditors. He is bankrupt and the crisis is at hand." Grace started. "You see I comprehend the situation. Many of his debts are due. I shall release him from my note and assist him to meet his obligations. One of his principal creditors owes me a debt of gratitude, which he will be glad to cancel by an extension of time to your father. Should he not continue in business, though he will be able to do so, I pledge myself to provide for him and your mother the remainder of their lives. I know my price, which is your own lovely, precious self, is heavy, but refuse and I enforce instant payment and use all my power to crush your father. Now you know my intentions and what my ultimatum is."

"How can you," said Grace, with streaming eyes, "ask me so calmly and deliberately to break my engagement with Mr. Lavallo? I love him. I have pledged myself to him, and with me a betrothal is as sacred as the bonds of marriage. Love is no chameleon."

"But," returned he eagerly, "should not an engagement carry with it mutual obligations of fidelity and devotion?"

"Most assuredly. But I have no cause to doubt Mr. Lavallo's fidelity to me."

"Not so fast, not so fast, my fair lady. I am sorry, but necessity compels me to wound your feelings. I can prove to you that Mr. Lavalie is attracted by another. The accumulation of letters of importance often detains him, forsooth, does it not? Ah! you turn pale, you tremble. You wonder how and where I find out these things. Ubiquitous, eh? Your hand implodes me to be still, your lips are motionless, words will not come, the tongue is heavy and refuses to do its duty. Well, as you are weak and cannot ask particulars, I shall tell you," said Arnold, mockingly and scornfully. "Lavalie basks in the smiles of a siren, your rival, your cousin, Letitia Rheinberg." He sat down with an exultant, diabolical smile, and calmly folded his hands to observe the effect his words produced.

Grace was not only pale, but livid. She wished to rush from his hated presence, but something stronger than her will caused her to remain and say, with a hoarse, half inaudible voice: "You speak falsely. You accuse him unjustly. I would that I were a man and I would force you to retract instantly."

"My charming pythoness, you are far more lovely in tears, far more beautiful in passion, than when unmoved; therefore, rage, but my words are nevertheless true."

Grace was about to give vent to her anger in a scathing reply, but those last words of his calmed her and she was silent. Her father's despair bound her to the spot; the chains, though invisible, were real.

"Think not," continued Arnold, "that I have

made this assertion without having proof. I wish to convince you with your own eyes of the damning—I beg pardon—evidence. I shall let you know when they meet again."

"Thank you, I do not wish to know. But you must have spies to be able to tell where and what moment Mr. Lavallo comes and goes."

"The moment he goes in and out I may not be aware of, but of one thing you can rest assured, that your intended passes the greater part of his time with Miss Rheinberg. This is already a well-known fact."

Arnold had resorted to the degrading business of spying. By bribing the servants of both houses he managed to gather a good deal of information. There were some persons who began to whisper that Lavallo called oftener on Letitia than his engagement to Grace justified, but that everybody knew this fact was improvised by Arnold to suit his purpose.

"I shall hear no more," said Grace.

"Will you not? Push the button, order me out," replied Arnold, defiantly. "Do you wish to know how your cousin has drawn your lover into her net and inextricably entangled him?"

"Have mercy and tell me nothing."

"Nor how she sings simple arias to him? simple, perhaps, but breathing an intense passion, to which he responds. To such a man you must be true, to be sure; you must not save your father," added Arnold, sarcastically.

"I shall not believe he is false unless my own eyes were to give me proof, and then I should think my brain had deceived my vision," said

Grace, resolutely, though her lover's neglect and frequent absences flashed over her mind a confirmation of the man's words.

"Sooner or later you will believe, for it is the truth," rejoined Arnold, solemnly. Grace looked at him shudderingly. "Now," said he, "I have told you all, and am anxiously awaiting your decision."

Grace raised her hands to her head with a gesture of despair. As she did so, the rings on her fingers, with their brilliant light, flashed across her eyes. At the same moment, the thought crossed her mind if she only dared to sell her valuable diamonds, the proceeds could be applied to cancel the debt. With this thought she threw her hands down and gave a second glance at the rings. An almost imperceptible smile passed over her face as she shaded it with her hands, but the movement, swift as it was, did not escape the vigilant Arnold. He simultaneously resolved to thwart any plan she might form.

She appeared sunk in a deep reverie when Arnold brusquely said, "A thousand pardons for disturbing your meditations, Miss Feld, but is it 'To be or not to be?'"

"Give my father an opportunity to appeal to his friends; then if we cannot succeed, God's will be done. Your wife I shall never be. Give my father time."

"No more than the note demands shall I give him. The money must be ready at the appointed time, which is to-day."

"I entreat you to wait until to-morrow or the next day. A day or two beyond time is nothing,

and though I can never love you, I shall respect you as a friend."

Arnold apparently hesitated, though he was desirous of granting the request, for he saw in his "mind's eye" results. "Well, for your dear sake, and with the hope that you may think better of my proposition, I accede to your wish. I *shall* call; but until to-morrow shall leave you undisturbed. I bid you farewell, my best beloved," and, bowing graciously, he took his leave.

Grace wearily threw herself into a chair and a low, wailing cry issued from her lips. "William, William, is it possible that you love me no more? That you, my ideal of all that is good, noble and ingenuous, should stoop to deception? Can my cousin be such a serpent? I shall give back the diamonds. I will have none of them."

"Grace," said her parents simultaneously on coming in, "what of Arnold. Tell all."

"You do not, cannot, wish me to tell all. My heart is tortured, my brain is reeling," answered Grace, clasping her hands together.

"Speak, child, has Lavallo gone, left the town?" inquired the excited father.

"I wish he had," said Grace, furiously.

"For heaven's sake, speak, Grace. You never acted like this before," added Mrs. Feld.

"I never had occasion to do so. Agony that I should have to speak it. Arnold says Lavallo loves me no longer, loves another!"

"To be sure he would say that," returned her mother. "Why, how foolish! jealous for nothing!"

"The doubts of my heart will not be so easily

dispelled. I remember his late evenings, his confusion, slips of speech, cold neglect, all tend to criminate him," said Grace, weeping bitterly.

"These are mere accidents and far from conclusive," replied her father, soothingly.

"Father, you remarked his absence the other evening. Unhappy me! miserable me! The woman who has taken him from me is——"

"Not Rebecca Silverbaum?" said her mother.

"Mother, you ought to know that William could never be magnetized by such a woman. It is Letitia, my cousin."

"My brother's child!" screamed Mrs. Feld, overcome with emotion. "I always knew she was a deceitful creature, but to do such a thing is terrible."

"I can scarcely believe it. Possibilities are not facts, Grace," said Mr. Feld, wishing to relieve her misgivings. Here was an unlooked for, a heart-rending sorrow. "I, your father," continued he, raising his hands appealingly to heaven, "am to blame for this. What shall I do?"

"Father, you did not turn William from me."

"But my condition now, child. If Arnold were only satisfied all might go well."

"Can such a nature be appeased?" asked Grace.

Mr. Feld requested his wife to appeal to her brother for assistance, and told Grace she must endeavor to win back Lavallo. No answer came from her pallid lips, as she was almost paralyzed with grief.

Mrs. Feld lost no time in seeking her brother. She told him all about her husband's pecuniary

difficulties, but not a word of Arnold's passion for Grace.

"Ruth," said Mr. Rheinberg, "help I cannot give you. Even the few hundred I have loaned Henry, I am sorry to say, I feel the want of. I might as well try to drain the Mississippi as to help him. As he has sown so he must reap. But a good advice I will give you; don't be foolish and drag in Laval. The man might become disgusted with Henry's actions and leave town. The gaming table has ruined Henry. Bah! his excesses could exhaust a mine. Let the worst come; the storm, like everything else, will blow over."

"It won't blow over, or, at least, it will blow Henry with it. He cannot stand it; he is reckless from shame and trouble."

"You must do your duty like a good wife; be kinder, more loving, more patient towards him than ever. God knows how willingly I would help you if I could, but I have all I can do to stand firm myself. Keep everything from Laval and hurry up the wedding," were Mr. Rheinberg's parting words.

"Well, what says your brother?" asked Mr. Feld, eagerly, as his wife returned home.

"As you well know, he cannot help you. He advises by no means to mention our trouble to Laval, but to hurry up the wedding."

"I think he is right. Grace, you must, as I told you before, try to keep him from that black-haired woman, whose song is death and whose eyes follow a man forever."

Grace shuddered at her father's acknowldg-

ment of her rival's fascinating orbs, that like a glamour led only to Orcus.

"If I just had Arnold off my track I might manage to shift, make liberal terms with my creditors, sell my property, continue my business and finally pull through. Let us pledge the diamonds," said Mr. Feld. He was so overcome, so enervated by his trouble, that the resolve of one moment was displaced by a new one the next.

Grace cowered in her chair.

"No," answered Mrs. Feld, "Lavalle would miss them."

"Grace can——"

"No, no," said Mrs. Feld, stamping her foot impatiently, "we have talked that over before. I will not consent to anything of the kind."

"You put the thought in my mind, woman, and woke up the sleeping evil in my heart."

"I said I wished my own could save you from ruin."

"A daughter should listen to the pleadings of a poor father who has done everything for her," said Mr. Feld in a half fierce, half whining voice. He had been fortifying himself with liquor while his wife was at her brother's and was gradually yielding to its influence.

"Dear father, I shall throw myself at the feet of William and trust to his generosity," replied Grace, who was now wavering in her purpose.

"I forbid you," continued her father, sternly, "to tell him how I stand."

Mrs. Feld sighed. Had not their misfortunes been her husband's work? Where had every-

thing gone to? Swallowed up in one unfathomable gulf; and here they were with all their prospects irretrievably ruined.

"Lavalle, I know," resumed Mr. Feld, "will not marry the daughter of a broken down man. Look out, Grace, for that girl; she will chain him if you don't. Pledge the diamonds, my sweet; in a few weeks I may be able to redeem them. He will be none the wiser and things will run smoothly."

"But, father," pleaded Grace, "they are not mine to pledge. Our marriage must first be solemnized before I can honorably and legally say they are mine to dispose of."

"Well, you *will* marry him," said Mr. Feld. "You are ready; we are all ready."

"But if anything should intervene to prevent the marriage, I am in duty and honor bound to restore the jewels. If they pass out of my hands, what restitution can I make?"

"They are yours, child; Lavalle gave them to you."

"They are only a conditional gift. My sense of justice and propriety would be shocked by parting with them under the present circumstances," added Grace, warmly.

"Well, if you will not give them up, what remains for your worthless old father but a little strychnine; that or the pistol will end all his trouble," and his voice, at first insinuating, was now indifferent and cold. The effects of the alcohol, under his great mental excitement, were passing away.

"Never," answered Grace, quickly, while a

deathly pallor overspread her face, "will I be so heartless as to be the murderer of my father. Take the jewels; do what you like with them. I shall sacrifice conscience at the shrine of filial affection and obedience."

"No, child, you must do more. You must take them in the dead of night, when the town's heart has ceased to beat, and get money; yes, money on them to pay this debt of honor. I will have to try and get the cashier of the new bank to give you a private interview. I think he will do me this favor. Then you can go and save your father. Your mother, my wife," said Mr. Feld, in a commanding tone, "will go with you. In the meantime I must hurry and make arrangements so that the cashier will be in his office and let you in when you call. I am off."

The desolate and broken-hearted wife had no more to say. Her husband had threatened self-destruction. She did not believe he would commit so fearful a crime, but despair had driven many a better and stronger man to such sacrilege. Mr. Feld's brain was weakened and half-crazed with drink, and who could tell what he would not do in a moment of black temptation?

"Grace, dear child, have courage. Something may happen to prevent you from giving up the jewels. God may show you a way to escape at the last moment," said Mrs. Feld, with a dim hope that deliverance would come.

"Mother, don't talk. I have lost hope, though at times a voice whispers that William may never know, that blind fortune may throw at the right

time luck in my father's way. I shall be like Micawber."

"Who is that, my child?"

"A character in Dickens' 'David Copperfield,' who is always waiting for 'something to turn up,' and whose troubles are without end."

"You make me nervous to compare yourself with such a person. You must not do it."

"Nonsense, mother; I shall leave you a while."

Grace sat weeping in her room when her friend, Mary Moss, entered. "Why in tears? Have the bright flowers already faded, the jewels lost their lustre? Dear Grace, lay up treasures for the Kingdom of Heaven, where the gold never rusts. Come, confide in me, you dear little lamb." There are times when the consolations and kind intentions of friends fall like mockery on the ear. This hour had come to Grace. No human being could mitigate her grief in this trial of supreme wretchedness and humiliation, save one, and that was Lavalley, and he was not there.

"You do not answer, Grace. I should have been here oftener and sooner to-day did I not think Mr. Lavalley was here, and, of course, I did not wish to intrude on your felicity. In your happy hours I leave you alone to enjoy them, but when in trouble I desire to be the first one at your side," and Mary embraced her tenderly, while her face lighted up with all the verve which religion gives.

Grace, making no reply, Mary resumed: "Grieve not over false rumors; your lover is true. Do not be afraid about his constancy."

She had heard some floating reports, and was not very delicate in her allusions to them.

"Don't question me. I am miserable to-day," said Grace, piteously, as her face assumed an ashen gray color.

"In the storms of life we must bravely buffet the waves. There is one who says, 'Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden.'"

"I am indeed heavily laden."

"Do you know whom I've seen to-day? Sister Louise. She is the embodiment of peace, contentment and happiness. She inquired kindly and lovingly for you. For some time the world, with its splendor, gayety and wealth, has veiled from you her fervent love and the charms of her sylvan retreat."

"I have not forgotten Sister Louise, Mary."

"The world is like the phantom island with its thousand spires. We long to be its adelantado, and we set our eager sails to reach it, but in vain; it flees before us and our pursuit ends only in despair. But from the fury of the elements there is one haven plain and secure that invites all to enter. This commodious retreat for the poor voyager wrecked on the stormy sea of life is the Church."

"I am not wrecked," responded Grace, defiantly, "and I am satisfied with the religion I have."

"God forbid that you should be wrecked. I am speaking only metaphorically. But when anything occurs to me, I turn to my religion. It offers me consolation and a home, and is therefore a blessed possession."

"Mary, you are a worthy disciple of the Cardinal of Ximenes de Cisneros," said Grace, smiling sadly.

"He strove only to regain the Holy Sepulchre, but I dream of planting the seeds of religion everywhere, trusting to God for their germination."

"Mary, light develops truth and truth is eternal. Necessity forces the adoption of a belief, but the essential required to mature truth is progress."

"Why, Grace," said Mary, jestingly, "I don't know where you found the time to think so much."

CHAPTER XXI.

Night came slowly on with leaden wings and the heaven was wrapped in clouds; no fleecy cirri which zephyrs could blow away, but heavy, black masses from which issued the forked lightning and the thunder in deep, sullen roars. The wind blew in gusts and ever and anon large drops of rain fell. Though the elements were thus raging, two men, enveloped in thick overcoats, emerged from the comfortable hotel. As the rain splashed in their faces, one, who was of light build, fair complexion and sandy hair, muttered: "What a night to be out in! I am almost sorry that I made the appointment, Arnold."

"It appears to me fit only for deeds of darkness and not for honest, legitimate transactions like ours, eh?"

Arnold's companion returned no answer save by an oath or two, until they reached a red brick building, when he fumbled in his pocket for a bunch of keys, and after opening several locks they found themselves in the Bank.

"Follow me. Here we are in the office. Wait a moment until I touch the button. There, the light is lighted, the blind is down, and no one, I think, knows we are here. Now sit down, Arnold, and tell me at once the necessity that draws you out of your comfortable room to-night."

"It is a paying business, man."

"For you maybe, but is it for me? You know, besides being cashier, I am deeply interested in the concern. Every dollar I have in the world is invested in it. Business is dull and it is confoundedly stupid here."

"Austin White, we have known each other for some time, long before we thought we should ever put foot in this place. Now you can accommodate me and at the same time make a handsome sum for yourself."

"Well, out with it, man. You know I am your willing instrument, provided that you require nothing that would bring me into the clutches of the law."

"Bah! I want no life taken."

"Not alone no murder, but I will do nothing that will dishonor me, I'll be hanged if I do."

"Since when have you become so scrupulous?" said Arnold, quickly and derisively. "Be wise, I tell you, and take advantage of this golden opportunity."

"See here, Arnold, don't trouble yourself about the whiteness of my soul. Look to your own. Quick and say what you want done, in which there is so much profit."

"Well, as I told you before, I heard that you made an appointment to transact some business with two ladies this evening (had I not been so fortunate I should not have solicited this interview), and they will probably offer to hypothecate some valuable jewels, worth over thirty thousand dollars. If they bring all they have

by no means allow them more than ten thousand."

"Hold, Arnold, this is not Rothschild's bank. Where are the ten thousand dollars to come from?" demanded White.

"All you have to do is to give them a check on this bank, which I answer to you will come—never mind how—into my possession to-morrow, and which I shall tear up in your presence; but you must give me the diamonds, etc., this very night. You see, no one connected with the bank will know about this side transaction of yours, and your reward shall be five thousand dollars."

"But in heaven's name what shall I do if at the expiration of a specified time they should wish to redeem the jewels?"

"Never fear; they cannot and will not be able to do so. I know all about them, and tell you positively that they cannot, and I repeat it emphatically so that you may not doubt. Your only risk lies in one probability, I say, that does not exist, but if you persist in thinking otherwise, I shall take an oath that I shall remain in town until the danger is over, and, of course, return you the diamonds if they are demanded. What say you to my proposition?"

"I say again I'll be hanged, old fellow, if I'll have the sword of Damocles hanging over me for months."

"Why do you insist upon saying there is danger when I say there's none. Say, White, do you remember when in Memphis you swindled old Sam Wells out of five hundred dollars, which he owed you on his note? Pretty rough, wasn't

it, to force a man to pay his note again and the very next day, only because he happened to drop it and you to pick it up? How if this community heard of your chivalrous deed? The tincture of the shield they would award you would scarcely tally with your name, and, whatever the mot, it would hardly be 'sine macula.'"

Austin White turned pale during this implied threat and banter, and his voice slightly quavered as he said, "Come, come, my friend, I, too, shall have to jog your memory as to your gambling operations."

"And I know a man," resumed Arnold, without appearing to notice his companion's counter-thrust, "who was connected with the 'Great Southern Collateral Bank' of New Orleans, and who, after sundry speculations there, thought fit to leave the hospitable Crescent City and come here. I don't suppose the officers of the law will follow you here, but if some babbler would drop a few words about his necessary hegira, I don't believe it would improve his credit, do you?"

"For God's sake, man, be quiet. I accept your terms. You are here, there, everywhere," said White, livid with rage.

"'Tis well we understand each other. You are young, talented and prepossessing; who can tell with your five thousand what good fortune may not be in prospective for you? Only be mum to what you hear and see concerning me, and I won't mind adding a gem or two to the money. You know that I am a liberal fellow."

"Yes, yes; but you have at times such venom that I feel as though I wanted neither your

honey nor your sting," and White forced out a low laugh.

"This will bind us to each other. But come now, you must conceal me somewhere. Ha, I shall go behind the statue of Minerva. I suppose some lover of art has been forced to leave this here?"

"No, this is no pawnshop," replied White, dryly; "it was a gift to the firm."

"Well, no matter," said Arnold in a sarcastic tone, "it will secrete me here as well. Here, let me throw my overcoat over it. Give me yours, too. Now," and he carefully arranged the coats to suit him, "that will do, and I am ready to see and hear all that transpires."

"I hope you won't imitate that goddess and spring threateningly upon me before I get through with my customers," said White, in an inaudible voice.

"Do you know," remarked Arnold, "the lighting is accommodating, illumining the way."

"Yes, for a moment, making darkness deeper the next. The rain is coming down in torrents. I am afraid they will not come."

"I will answer for that. It yet lacks two moments of the appointed time," said Arnold, looking at his watch.

"Hist," returned White, "I hear one, two, three knocks, the signal agreed upon."

Arnold jumped behind the statue and White quickly opened the door and admitted two women. They were enveloped in woolen wraps, but they shivered, nevertheless, as the rain,

though warm, was heavy, and had soaked through the material.

"Follow me into the office, ladies, and sit down," said White, placing two chairs with their backs to the statue.

"Ah!" muttered Arnold, between his teeth, "here they are. I am real magnanimous to take the girl, as I can have the money, or, rather, the diamonds without her, but then I have such a penchant for that pretty creature, with her flossy golden hair, and eyes like forget-me-nots, that I lose sight of everything. By Jove, a man should make some sacrifice for such a piece of feminine loveliness."

The women threw back their hoods, but no faces were visible, as they wore heavy veils to escape recognition. The quick, nervous motions of one caused her wrap to fall aside and show a wrist of delicate mold and snowy whiteness.

"Curse that wrap!" uttered Arnold, in an inaudible tone, as he peeped out from the side of the statue. "Must White see that beautiful wrist? She will betray herself yet with her timid ways. Heavens, how she is shaking. I wish I were there to steady her. Girl, I wish I were as sure of you as of the diamonds."

The elder lady, in a rapid manner and a trembling voice, said she wished to hypothecate some elegant jewels, and at the same time taking from beneath her wrap some five or six velvet cases and opening them. White, who had been hitherto endeavoring to discover who his applicants were, now uttered an indiscreet exclamation of

delight on beholding the beauty of the jewels, but checked it instantly.

"These are very valuable and nothing but great necessity could make us part with them, even for a little while. They will be redeemed at furthest in two months. How much can you advance us on them?"

The younger woman listened with bowed head, while her frame shook as if she were in a convulsion. Was the magic mirror showing her that parting with the jewels was a death-knell to her hopes of happiness?

"Madam, I'll offer you at once a very high figure for them, five thousand dollars," and while White spoke, he gazed upon the jewels with rapturous avidity.

"No, never," said the younger woman; "it would be a useless sacrifice," and she drew up her head proudly. If the cashier had only persisted in his offer how that aching heart would have been relieved! She had come to the altar, brought her offering with a bleeding heart, and if it were not accepted would have deemed her duty done. As the last box was closed, joy leapt through her heart, but vanished as White pronounced the knell to her hopes, "Stop, it shall be ten thousand."

"If only that lovely head were on my arm," mumbled Arnold, as Grace's head dropped low down on her bosom.

The elder lady reopened the casket with alacrity. "Do not be in such a hurry; the money is not manna," said the young woman.

"Very nearly," replied the other. To her

prayer for twenty thousand, White answered with a laugh of contempt; for fifteen thousand with a firm but respectful refusal. "Rothschild has no bank here, madam. Ten thousand is an immense amount of money and the full worth of the precious stones. That amount can relieve your pressing wants. You shall have a check on this bank, which is as good as any in the Union," said he, glibly.

"I will never part with them, mother," said Grace, for the first time revealing their relationship, "unless to clear off entirely that monster's debt." The voice was low, but to make it more emphatic, she stamped her foot decidedly.

"But, my dear child, it may satisfy him."

"The vampire will not be satisfied, he will want more blood."

"We must bring home money, child."

During this colloquy the eye of White rested on them like the basilisk, waiting to grasp his prey. In vain they entreated, implored, him to advance a few thousand more. The mother was anxious to take the money, and, by repeated urging, the daughter was induced to give a reluctant consent.

Thus did Mrs. Feld and her daughter hypothecate the jewelry, consisting of diamonds of the first water, pearls large and clear as snow-drops, rubies of a deep red hue, indicating their Oriental origin, and a variety of sapphires, some blue, some purple, the latter called Oriental amethysts. All were pledged, even the fine blue sapphires that came from Ceylon. This last was consid-

ered a sacred stone by the Ancients and was worn by the Jewish high-priest.

For all these Grace and her mother received a check for ten thousand dollars on the bank and a receipt for the jewels. With these little pieces of paper in their possession the door closed on them. They passed out into the pitiless, pelt-ing rain, without even a star to throw a friendly ray and guide them on their homeward course.

When they had gone Arnold emerged from his hiding place and, with a sneering, mocking laugh, cried out, "Bravo, fine ladies; to-morrow I shall have the check and the diamonds."

"We have transacted our business, let us go," said White, abruptly.

"Not so fast, White. You need not know the direction the women take. Tell me, I forgot to ascertain, who asked you to make the appointment?"

"Well, you see, I saw Feld pass, and as he did so, he looked at me as if he wished to say something. He came back, spoke to me a few moments, but concluded seemingly not to tell his business. He passed down the street and then back to the office of Everard. I thought something must be up. In about an hour afterwards he came and requested the interview. But look you, Arnold, I should know who the girl is without that. This is a small place, where the affairs of all are known. This is the only woman or, rather, girl in this town who possesses such ornaments, and she is the intended bride of that fastidious New Yorker."

"You are very shrewd, White, but I advise

you not to allow your wisdom to travel. Lavalles did not treat you with much consideration when he met you last week, did he? You need not answer. Cashiers like you and lecturers like me are not high-toned enough for his highness. How I hate him! I believe he is well acquainted in New Orleans."

"Well, what if he is. The minions of the law cannot arrest me, and as to Lavalles snubbing me, it was because I was with you."

"By heaven, man, it is dangerous for you to repeat that. But keep your counsel, act faithfully to me, and here is your check for five thousand dollars. It is on the Bank of Missouri, a little better than *your* rotten concern. Deal with me treacherously, and I will be on your track like a Danite. Beware, I say, of Bernard Arnold."

White trembled violently. He left behind him in New Orleans a bad record, and would fain become virtuous and good, but felt compelled to do this iniquitous action lest his former career be made known. Evil is a garment which we cannot put on and off at discretion. Once in its folds, it clings to us like the poisoned tunic of Nessus.

"Come, hand over the diamonds," said Arnold. "Now you walk ahead. I shall put out the light and follow you," and so the pair, bound together by wickedness, went out, still with distrust and hatred lurking in their hearts.

CHAPTER XXII.

Night had passed and gathered the roses from the cheeks of Grace, taken the smile from her lips, and dimmed the brilliancy of her eyes. She wished the day was over, but did not dare go near the library to hear what was occurring there.

"Well, Mr. Arnold," said Feld, on meeting that gentleman in his house, "here is a check for ten thousand dollars. The balance I'll pay as soon as I can, in a few days I hope. This money has been dearly procured." Alas! it had come at the price of a daughter's happiness. The sacrifice was worse than Iphigenia's; for Grace was immolated without one hand being raised to save her.

"Indeed, I want to leave this confounded, stupid place, and I must have all or the girl. Never forget the conditions on which I release you," replied Arnold, at the same time pocketing the draft.

"Begone and wait. You want to rob me of life. No, never," and Mr. Feld's fist came down on the table near which he was standing with a heavy thud, and he closed the sentence with an expression more emphatic than polite.

Arnold rose from his chair, pulled his moustache, twirled his cane nervously, raised his arm

threateningly, and said: "Beware how you raise the demon within me. When on the path of vengeance I am as ruthless as the Duke of Alva when pursuing heretics in Holland—to torture, gives me exquisite delight."

"Don't talk to me of what you will do."

"But that girl, Mr. Feld, with her fair face and fair hair should be pleased to have another lover at her side, as the other one, you know, has cast her off."

"Have a care, Mr. Arnold," and Feld's brow grew dark, his eyes shot forth lurid gleams, his form shook with the vehemence of his emotions. "I am a father."

"Pshaw! man, remember I will assist to release you from the pressure of debt, which will crush you like an avalanche. But, I do so want your charming daughter?" and Arnold's voice, which was at first loud and insinuating, now assumed a low, tender, pathetic and even pleading tone.

"My eyes run over," said Feld, weeping. "I am down, down. What will become of my little Grace?"

"Beautiful Grace, you should say. Pure and graceful as a lily, sweet as a tuberosé is she," added Arnold.

"My stay on earth is Grace; through her I hope for heaven."

"Give her to me. We shall all abide together," and Arnold, seating himself, commenced to beat a tattoo with his foot and crush the petals of a delicate jasmine which he had unconsciously taken from a terra cotta vase close to him.

"Give her to you, man?"

"Yes, to me. I have drifted into the foaming, intoxicating sea of love; be careful that it is not transformed into a seething cauldron of hate. Give the girl to me and you will never have cause to regret it. I shall work for you as well as for her," and Arnold's eyes kindled with a passionate light. "I shall cherish, protect and, if need be, die for her. I swear to you by the sacred name of my mother to be a true, devoted and loving husband. Every purpose and every thought of my life shall be employed in making myself worthy of her."

"A gambler's word," said Mr. Feld, laughing loudly and derisively.

"I pledge myself to renounce gambling, if she will ask it with her own pure lips," answered Arnold, but observing Feld's lips curl with scorn, he resumed. "The girl I must have or the money," and the angry blood surged over his dark face and a dangerous light leapt into his eyes.

"And if not?"

"Man," cried Arnold, "trifle not with me, you know the alternative."

"Well, well, friend, let the check answer for the present," said Feld, whose only object was to gain time and endeavor to have Grace's marriage with Lavalie consummated. "Give me a couple of weeks' time to persuade my child, and then if not, let ruin come. I can only be swept away, that is all," and he buttoned his coat and folded his arms, as if he were ready to meet his fate like some Roman of old with his toga

around him. It was the last gleam of nobility in a human soul before it collapses and dies. And Arnold, like other evil doers, had to be contented and bide his time.

"Mother," said Grace to Mrs. Feld, "Rebecca is in the parlor. I am sure I do not want to see her. I shall send down word 'not at home, engaged,' anything."

"No, Grace, go and see her. You will feel all the better, dear, for seeing some one. In listening to her talk you will forget your own troubles. Go, go."

"I never can forget my own sorrows, but I shall obey you. Do my eyes look very red?"

"No; you can say you have a headache."

"It will be the truth, too. For my poor head racks me sadly. You must not cry, though; it will not alter anything. It will not bring me happiness. It is not your fault, dear," and Grace tenderly kissed her mother and left the room.

"Why, Grace, I have not seen you for an age. You owe me a visit, you know, but I was afraid you were sick, so I thought I shouldn't be ceremonious," and Rebecca Silverbaum shook her hands vigorously.

"I have not been—I am not very well. My head aches so," said Grace, seating herself.

"No, you don't look well, feverish like. You should take something," added Rebecca, sympathizingly. "Ma has some excellent medicine for fever; I shall bring you some."

"Pray don't trouble yourself. This fever must

cure itself. I never take medicine except when absolutely necessary."

"What a baby you are. You are positively alarmed about taking a little medicine. You must be like me, Grace; they tell me that I grow stouter every day, that being engaged 'agrees' with me. But, to tell you the truth, I am not so contented as people think," and Rebecca looked dismal for half a minute.

"What can possibly disturb you, Rebecca? Mr. Berkhoff is loving——"

"Loving, is it?" interrupted Rebecca. "I should think he was. If I were to say I had a headache, he would neglect his pleasure—that is, his business—to be around me. I am his 'life,' he says."

"Rebecca, what more can a woman demand than the whole love of the man she intends to marry? You are in heaven."

"I don't want to be in heaven, Grace. I want to try it on earth—and you know here we need earthly things. Of course I love Berkhoff, because he is good and gives me everything; that is, I have all he can afford. Your intended must be very rich, people all say so. What a cry they make about your diamonds, your jewelry, heavens! are you sick?" said Rebecca, as Grace turned deathly pale, closed her eyes and lay back in the chair. "What shall I do, ring for help or run for your mother?"

"Neither," replied Grace, faintly. "I am sorry, but you will have to excuse me; I am not feeling well," and she burst into tears.

"Dear heart, what did you come down for?"

I would have gone up to your room. Let me take you upstairs. I can almost carry you. I know you are as light as a feather."

"Thank you, Rebecca, I shall not go upstairs; I might alarm my mother. I am going to take a nap in this chair, and when I wake up I think I shall feel better. You must be sure and call another day," said Grace, making a vain attempt to smile.

"Certainly, I shall. You must not get sick now, you must get married soon. Ma says it is time for me too. She is dreadfully down on long engagements. Good-bye. If I see Mr. Lavalley, I shall send him to you."

"Rebecca, you will not, you must not, I mean ought not to, do anything of the kind," exclaimed Grace.

"Don't get excited. If you don't want me to I won't tell him," said Rebecca, as she gently closed the door after her and went down to Berkhoff's store at a rapid pace.

"Busy, Berkhoff," said Rebecca, while she nodded to the clerks.

"Always time for you, my dumpling," resumed Berkhoff in her ear as he walked down to the office with her.

"Well, how are things in general?" jerked out Rebecca.

"Pretty much the same, no change for the better. Don't you change."

"I have been to see Grace Feld," returned Rebecca, changing the subject. "She is not well, she says, but I believe things are wrong up there. What can the matter be, I wonder?"

"You see, Rebecca, that Grace, with all her jewelry, is not happy."

"She ought to be, I am sure."

"But suppose Lavalley goes to see some one who has struck his fancy? She thinks if she was you she would be happy. Report has long words about Lavalley, stories maybe. You know I haven't much time for these things now."

"You must offer a few suggestions to Everard about it, he seems to be intimate with Mr. Lavalley," said Rebecca, whose ears were ringing with Grace's cry about love.

"That Lavalley I don't know much about. He is mighty fine and don't take up much with me, and might get mad at a word from Everard. I'll see. Everard needs talking to himself."

"Why, Berkhoff, Everard is a model man. I thought you liked him."

"I do think the world of him, that's just the reason. He is good and noble, but I am afraid he will throw himself away."

"Into somebody's arms, I guess," said Rebecca, laughing.

"Don't laugh. It's too great a matter. He is after the daughter of the Philistines," answered Berkhoff, seriously.

"I declare I have never seen any one like you. I know he has no more idea of such a thing than he has of marrying me; that's remote enough, isn't it?"

"I hope so, Rebecca. He is too good a friend of mine to think of you. But I am afraid——"

"Never mind. Whom here shall he court? Grace Feld and I are engaged. Letitia Rhein-

berg he dislikes, and I am glad of it; so he goes to see the Hills. He calls Amelia 'dignified, elegant, refined.' I call her puffed up, haughty, arrogant. But he talks of her too coldly to love her. When he is ready to marry he will import a girl from St. Louis or the East. Don't worry about him, think of yourself. Whose pretty flowers are these?" said Rebecca, pointing to a handsome bouquet in a tumbler of water.

"They are for you, dear. I was going to bring them to you this evening. You like flowers," replied Berkhoff, pressing her hand affectionately.

"And all pretty things," returned Rebecca. They say Lavalley sends or brings Grace a bouquet every day."

"It must cost much money, too much for me to spend in such perishing things, and then you have flowers in your little garden."

"You see," said Rebecca, taking her hand away from Berkhoff, "that is what wealth does, it creates a love for the beautiful."

"There you are mistaken, my girl, that's born in the heart. You are beautiful, and twenty millions could not make me find one more beautiful."

"I must be going," said Rebecca, laughing, "your talk is growing too sweet."

"Are you going because I am coming in, Miss Rebecca," said Everard, walking in.

"No, but because it is time for me to be home. Good-bye," and Rebecca went off in great haste.

"I am growing more helpless every day. It is no use. I shall have to fail, and soon, too. If I

was only sure of the girl, I wouldn't care; for I intend afterwards to pay up all my debts dollar for dollar if I live long enough," added Berkhoff.

"A stupendous work," said Everard, whistling, "for you owe many thousands, and unless you have extraordinary good luck, it will require very economical living to pay off. Still, if you have the courage to face the future in that way, I admire your pluck and honesty," and he took Berkhoff's hand and shook it warmly.

"You know how I feel about this miserable business, and that I have tried every possible way to get clear. I can't do it now, but I must do it some day. Poor Rebecca, I have told her things don't go as they should, but she has no idea how they are going. I'll hold on as long as I can though."

"By all means. Have you given up all hopes of collecting those large debts?"

"I think I might as well. If I could get in all my bad debts I would be flush. This credit system here has ruined me. I shall have to fail through others failing to pay me. I wonder if they feel as bad about it as I do?"

"I am afraid not, Berkhoff. Have hope. Hand over all your bad debts to me for collecting; I shall see what I can do with them."

"I should have done that some time ago."

"Well, it will do now, if anything can be done. I shall be over to-morrow and look at your books. I must go now. I have a little business at the office to look over."

"Say, Everard, do you see much of that Lavalley?"

"I see him sometimes at the hotel. He has kept himself a little distant of late, so I give him plenty of room."

"Do you know, Rebecca was to see Miss Feld, and thinks she is unhappy. Have you heard any tales?" inquired Berkhoff.

"The air is thick with rumors, but I never pay attention to such things; for I think he is too much of a gentleman to wander very far from the path."

"I thought you might hint to him about the talk, the wrong."

"Stop, please. Do not make any such requests of me. It must be a dear friend for me to interfere with his private affairs. I have sufficient to do to attend to my own."

"Everard, I am your friend, am I not? though not on footing with you on book-learning."

"I think you are my friend, and there must be congeniality somewhere, though I cannot tell the spot."

"Let me warn you of the danger you are in."

"See here, Berkhoff," returned Everard, coldly, "I thank you for your kindness, but, thank God, my vision is perfect. I need no guide to show me the way. Good-day."

"Are you mad?" said Berkhoff, going after him.

"No, no; but I must go now. I shall return at the appointed time."

"A pretty thing, indeed," muttered Everard: "I am to reprove Lavalley, while Berkhoff under-

takes to be my censor! How do you do, ladies," and he took off his hat and bowed deeply to the Misses Hill. "Are you going home?"

"Yes," replied Amelia.

"Have you any objection to company?"

Amelia remained silent, but Alice answered, "Certainly not."

"Dear me, Alice," said Charlie Bennett, "you make a fellow perspire. I caught a glimpse of you some two blocks down the street and immediately commenced the chase. Thanks, Mr. Everard, for detaining the ladies a moment. Come, Alice, have compassion on me and do some talking this warm weather."

"Charlie, be quiet. I command you not to say another word until we arrive home," returned Alice.

"Nor you, either; an injunction we shall both follow, won't we?" said Charlie, laughing merrily.

"I think, Miss Hill, we shall have to form the van of the file," said Everard, as Bennett and Alice fell back. "Though novel, a pleasant position for us to be in."

Amelia adroitly turned the subject to her father's condition, saying, "Dear father cannot attend to his law business so closely as formerly, and if he were not of such a genial, sunny disposition he would become irritable, but he grows kinder, more amiable, more charitable."

"Such diseases require time, Miss Hill, and I think your father will regain perfect health."

"I hope and pray so."

They walked on in silence until they reached

the gate, when Bennett ran up, exclaiming, "Well, Amelia, I have never seen your equal. You will be the champion female pedestrian if you keep on. Alice and I have been striving in vain to keep up with you. Mr. Everard, you will take a prize, too, I am sure. The very poplars are sighing and protesting against such conduct."

"I have no faith in those trees, they tell too many tales," said Everard.

"Next time I shall stand still and wait for you and Charlie," said Amelia, laughing.

"That would be demanding too much, would it not, Alice?" asked Bennett.

"No time to discuss the question now. It is too warm," replied Alice. "Come in, Mr. Everard."

"Yes, come in," added Bennett.

Everard lingered, but said, "No, thank you."

"Mr. Everard, will you not come in and see father?" said Amelia, as she stooped and plucked a beautiful Marechal Niel rose.

Everard gladly availed himself of the pretext to see Amelia's father.

"And if you will stay to dinner," said Alice, "we will have such a pleasant time afterwards. Charlie tells me you are proficient in instrumental and vocal music, and as we all play a little, we shall have a concert on a small scale. Papa will be delighted," and the little programme was carried out.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was a calm summer afternoon in the latter end of June. All nature shone in her charms of vegetable and floral life. Trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, wild flowers and exotics were everywhere in a wild luxuriance. Red and black cherries hung down from their overladen branches, ripe apples strewed the ground, the fences were thickset with the fruitful gooseberry and raspberry bushes, the strawberry vines with their pulpy and delicious fruit ran along close to the earth. Garden and orchard were clothed with the flush and beauty of the tropics.

The rain of the night previous had laid the dust. The heliotrope, jasmine and lemon verbena perfumed the air. A beautiful humming bird flew fearlessly into the open window of the room where Grace was sitting, darted out again and lighted on the window-sill, pecking with its long bill at a crumb which had fallen there.

"Mother," said Grace to Mrs. Feld, who was attempting to embroider a handkerchief, "see that bird with its brilliant plumage, how it hums and chirps. Oh, that I could be as happy as it is."

"Wait, child, time may bring it."

"Time brings roses, but no more for me."

"Lavalle has not forgotten you, because he sends you the flowers regularly."

"But, mother, formerly, he brought them himself or sent a note and soon followed. But, mother, mother," continued Grace, frantically, "why does he not come? He is well, for when father calls he is out. It is a frightful question I am going to ask you, is he guilty?"

"I do not think he is, and if he should be, give him a little time; he will see his wrong and come back to you."

"But I do not want to think, I want to know, mother. This suspense is horrible; it is killing me."

"Well, I told you before to have him watched and make him come back to his duty. Your father says he will make him know that he must marry you."

"No, no, mother; I pray you not to do that. I do not wish an investigation. 'Seek and ye shall find.' To force him back to me, that would never, never do," cried Grace, wringing her hands.

"What shall be done, then?" said her mother, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"Nothing. If William is not guilty, am I not? Let father leave him alone and not forget the jewels. Before I gave up the diamonds it grieved me to think of it, now that action has expanded and magnified into a formidable guilt, which leaves me no rest. It is a hideous nightmare."

"You must drive it away and not think of it."

"But it is like Banquo's ghost and will 'not down,' " sobbed Grace.

"Don't take on so. Your hope lies in marrying him."

"Of course, that is my salvation, if he would voluntarily, but if not——"

"But what of Arnold?" interrupted her mother.

"Horror! that villain's hateful proposition still rings in my ears. I wish William would come. I want to see him and I do not want to see him. When he does come what shall I say to him about the jewels?" gasped Grace.

"Child, you must not be afraid; if you do, all is lost. He will not ask you; it is not expected that you should always wear your handsomest jewels."

"But if he should, I must be prepared for such an emergency," urged Grace.

"Say you don't want to wear them all the time, that you don't care much for jewelry."

"But he knows better. And the rings? I have always worn some of them."

"Well, taste changes. Say you don't care now. God will put some happy thought into your mind to-day," replied Mrs. Feld, earnestly.

"But, mother, I am in fear God will forget me then. Once entangled in the network of untruth and deception, it appears to me as difficult to escape as from an Egyptian labyrinth. I know, mother, I shall never be able to extricate myself," and Grace sighed dismally.

"Put your trust in God, Grace; we are in trouble, we must pray to Him to help us and He will." With this solemn assurance Mrs. Feld

kissed her daughter tenderly and left her to her own reflections.

Grace covered her face with her hands to shut out the terrible reality and moaned aloud. A hand was softly laid on her shoulder, another softly stroked her hair, then glided to her face, took her hands off and worked over it with gentle touch and mesmeric power.

"Is it you, dear Mary?"

"In tears again? Come, come, this will never do. Will you not confide in me, your most devoted friend? What troubles your gentle heart? Speak and tell me, I beseech you."

"I would that I could."

"Well, try and do it. Am I your friend only when you bask in the sunshine of fortune? Would I desert you when she frowns and threatens to take all her gifts away? You know me too well to suppose that. I love you as truly as ever Jonathan did David. Oh, that I could avert any danger that menaces you," said Mary, kissing Grace affectionately. The fervent and consoling words came truly from her heart, and were well calculated to affect deeply a being so susceptible as Grace.

"Alas! my troubles are greater than I can bear," and Grace wept afresh.

"The shoulders are always fitted to the burden."

"My shoulders are too weak; I shall sink under the weight. Unless it is removed it will crush me to the earth."

"Well, then, let me be your Atlas, let me bear at least some of the burden," rejoined Mary,

smilingly; "with my shoulders you need not fear."

"Your intentions are good any way."

"Indeed they are. But it is no wonder that your thoughts are heavy, confined as you keep yourself to the house. Everything calls you out to-day. Come, go bathe your face."

"But I do not wish to go out."

"Yes, yes, you must. Go get your white sacque, hat and veil. Here they are," and as Mary spoke, she put on Grace's sacque, took the pretty white chip hat with its jaunty ribbons from the bandbox, placed it on her head, arranged her veil, and putting her arm through hers they went into the street.

"You do with me what you like. I have not the strength to remonstrate."

"Why should you, when it is for your good? It is so pleasant now that we shall take a little stroll and sit under our favorite hawthorn tree. The soft atmosphere, the flowers, the quiet, charming streets will enliven your drooping spirits."

Grace did not answer her companion, but walked on with downcast eyes.

"Here we are at your cousin's house. Have you seen her to-day?"

"No, let us walk a little faster so that we can get out of the dust."

"Dust," exclaimed Mary, "there is none. You forget it rained last night. Shall we stop for Letitia?"

"No," returned Grace, tremblingly, "I do not wish to see her."

"There is a window open there. I wish I could look in and see if she is there."

"Mary," cried Grace, "if you do not come on I shall turn back. I do not wish to see any one, I tell you."

"Well, well, come on, dear; you cannot see much through that veil and none can see you."

Neither spoke, but walked on until they found themselves under the old hawthorn tree, when Mary said: "How thankful I am for this little bench. Sit down; remove your veil, dear. No one will see you here."

Grace sat down and the tears sprang to her eyes. This was the favorite resting place of Lavalley. Not so very long ago this tree had sheltered her and her affianced husband. He had told her, though he loved the pearly whiteness of her cheeks, yet, by autumn, when she would be his happy bride, her cheeks should be as red as the clustering berries would one day be on this old, stunted hawthorn tree. The memory of those happy times came to her like a dream.

"Dear Grace," resumed Mary, "do not grieve so. With all your jewels, laces and velvets are you not happy? Or have you come to the conclusion that earthly things lose their freshness? What has become of the beautiful rings you always wore?" and Mary, for the first time, observed her friend's hands, and saw through the lace mitts that the fingers lacked the sparkling jewels.

"I left them at home," returned her companion carelessly, yet becoming crimson. "I do not care for them any more."

"Then you must have some serious trouble, dear Grace. It is now that you feel the want of the comfort of our holy religion."

"It will not give me what I want; I seek only a balm for my wounded heart."

"Those who are under its blessed influence receive that and it can be derived from no other source."

"In what way?" demanded Grace, eagerly.

"Confession alone will relieve your wounded spirit."

"Confession I consider one of the peculiar and hateful observances of the Catholic religion. To lay open the heart with its hideous lacerations, to confide in another, a stranger who is not in sympathy with one's feelings, to reveal thoughts which are concealed within the innermost recesses of the soul, delicate as the breath of a zephyr, is to me a profanation. I mean nothing personal. I have only said what I earnestly feel."

"I am not at all angry. But, dear Grace, I must tell you you have a mistaken view of confession. It is heaven's own dew sent to moisten the parched deserts over which man has to travel in his earthly pilgrimage. To unfold our sorrows mitigates them, to unburden our secrets is balsam to our souls."

"This institution of Roman Catholicism, by which all our affections, passions, joys and sorrows are laid bare, appears to me an odious tyranny."

"It is an essential observance constituted by God to alleviate the misery and guide the pas-

sions of poor, deluded man. How many a poor mortal borne down with misery and oppression, not knowing which way to take, has gone with weary steps and fainting heart to one of these holy men and told him the cause of his distress; the priest, with paternal advice and divine inspiration, guides him and he comes out of the confessional with beaming eyes and throbbing heart, thanking God for having made so fine a provision for his wants as this rite affords."

"Hush!" said Grace. "Can order come out of the chaos of my ideas?"

"What could give you more comfort," continued Mary, "than to pour into some sympathizing ear the story of your troubles and rely for guidance on some good, pure and holy person?"

"According to your explanation, I should not find it inquisitorial or analytic, but tender, compassionate, circumspect."

"Grace," said Mary, as her face lighted up with a glow akin to enthusiasm, "is light breaking through the darkness of your thoughts? Would you embrace it?"

"Have I been groping in the dark?"

"Think, Grace, of the trials and temptations to which the saints were subjected before their conversion, and they were all the better for them. They came out of the furnace like refined gold; purified of the dross. Many and many have suffered martyrdom for our blessed religion, some were canonized. And you are near salvation; turn not from it," added Mary, earnestly.

"Mary, I am weary. Let us go home. Mother will be uneasy at my absence."

When the two friends wended their way homeward the sun was sinking below the western horizon, tipping the valley with purple and gold, and one by one the starry host appeared.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Why, man," said Lavallo to Berkhoff, as he met him in the corridor of the hotel, "why this haste, this agitation?"

"Mrs. Silverbaum sent me word that my Rebecca is not feeling well. I must run, I have no patience," and Berkhoff darted off with lightning speed.

Lavallo retraced his steps to his rooms. "The words, 'My Rebecca,'" said he, "have acted upon me like a shower bath. I have been delirious, but all dizziness is gone, my head is clear," and he pressed his hands to his brow. "I can laugh now at the machinations. The fetters are broken which for a few fleeting weeks riveted my soul with a vise-like clasp, yet fetters that, in the heat of passion, I thought golden. The spell is over, the enchantment broken. I shall make amends to my darling Grace with my life for those weeks of wavering love and violated fidelity. My little violet overshadowed by a taller and gaudier flower! I could weep tears of blood for my honor and my faith. But, thank God, there is no harm done. Nothing but idle words spoken in moments of delusion. I must seek my beloved Grace immediately. I have already wasted too much time in this retrospection."

He passed before the mirror and, observing

his disheveled hair, went back, took his brush and arranged it carefully. The parting of the hair, the folding of the necktie, the adjusting of the cuffs, were done with minute precision; they did not betray the emotions raging within his soul. Having completed his toilet to his satisfaction, he took up his cane and left the room. He walked along the hall in an abstracted manner, when he unintentionally jostled rather violently against a man.

"Hello! a collision. Why the deuce, this concussion almost upset my gravity! Makes a fellow feel queer in the cerebral regions," and Arnold rubbed his left hand slowly and composedly across his forehead. Lavalley received the shock like a veteran of war. He was going to apologize and pass on with a word of recognition, when he suddenly stopped. He became very pale, and his respiration came and went in heavy puffings. He did not articulate, but hissed forth the words, "Where did you get that?"

"What do you mean?" and there stood Arnold, with utmost sang froid, stroking his moustache with his left hand, while an evil gleam leapt into his eyes.

Lavalley with a fire of a volcano slumbering in his bosom was furious at his nonchalance and assumed ignorance. He seemed like "ægis-hearing Jove" when he spoke. "Beware, demon, how you mock me. How came you in possession of that ring on the little finger of your left hand? The gold circle must have been enlarged, but that peculiar setting I know. Answer me immediately."

Not a flush rose to Arnold's face. The blood coursed regularly through the proper channels as he said, "Rather a *peculiar* question for you to ask of me."

"Do not trifle with me, I warn you," replied Lavallo, losing command over himself, while his adversary remained cool.

"Mon cher ami, why this temper? I declare I have never seen you act this way before. You will arouse the inmates. Had not fortune favored you at this present time, at the expense of some unlucky waiter crashing a lot of crockery, you would have been overheard, and to be explanatory before the people might seriously compromise the reputation of one," and now Arnold's voice was full of tenderness, "who is dearer to me than life."

Lavallo, who was now alive to the fallacy of his temper and peril of an exposure, made no reply. Arnold's closing sentence gave birth to a fearful suspicion, which quenched the raging fires and so stupefied him that he allowed Arnold to take him by his arm to his room, place two chairs, throw himself into one and tell him to be seated in the other.

"I am seated now and waiting for an explanation," said Lavallo.

"You shall have it. I have on my finger this diamond, whose luster would not pale by the side of the famous Kohinoor, and though I need not, shall not tell all I know of the history connected with it, I value it not for its worth, which, though great, is nothing in comparison to that of the donor. I hold it above all gems, because it pro-

cures me earthly happiness. It brings me a heart for whose slightest pulsation I would risk heaven and earth, pull Jove from his throne, pitch Vulcan into the sea, take the trident from Neptune and send destruction into Mount Olympus."

"Ha, ha," laughed Lavalley ironically, "how easy to annihilate imaginary powers."

"Never mind ridicule. She will be mine soon, is mine now in promise, and is doubly precious because I snatched her from another's arms. I love her wildly, madly, and would destroy anything and everything as I do this," and Arnold, taking his cane, shivered it into fragments and sent them flying through the open window, regardless of the pedestrians below.

As Lavalley divined who that person might be, every word spoken by Arnold was like a funeral pall thrown on his bright hopes. The shock he sustained by the unexpected necessity of doubting the pure love and the good faith of his betrothed so prostrated him that he barely had the strength to ask, "The name of this girl?"

"Well, now, I believe it is not a general custom to tell every one for the mere asking the name of one's fiancée. The lovely girl gave me the ring; I could not squeeze it on my little finger. She begged me to take it to Young's and have the diamond reset in another circlet of gold to fit mine. I had it done at once, and then brought it to her, at the same time asking her to put it on for me, which she did in a charming, naive manner. Ah! those delicate, soft fingers. I feel their gentle, loving touch still," and

Arnold closed his eyes in rapture, as if to enjoy over again those delicious moments. After a few seconds he unclosed them and said: "But I don't care if I do transgress the rules for once and tell you. You are a sort of confidential friend, you know, and therefore will rejoice in my happiness. The name of my affianced is—Grace Feld." With a mocking, exulting laugh, he sprang to the door and hastily left the building.

So overcome was Lavalie by this revelation—though from the commencement of Arnold's talk he imagined, yet fondly hoped, he might be mistaken—that for the moment he could only moan, "Faithless as Cressid, faithless as Cressid." In a little while more the leering, jeering face of Arnold, his mocking tone, his ringing, defiant laugh, came floating back to him. "Where is the villain?" said he, looking around, "I wish he were here so I could throttle him or force him to retract. As Asmodeus murdered the seven husbands of Sara, so could I murder any number of men who dare unjustly attack the fidelity and truthfulness of Grace to me. She cannot be unfaithful, but I cannot account for that ring. That diamond I gave her, and if his words are true my faith in all womankind will be gone, my beautiful dream of life shattered." Sweet memories of other days pleaded with Lavalie not to condemn Grace unheard. His soul, sick with fear, still cried out, "My Grace must be innocent as her whole life has been. I am a fool, imposed upon by the words of a rascal. I shall go and investigate. I am sure my little girl's character

will stand out brighter than ever. She is under a cloud now, but 'every cloud has a silver lining.' If Arnold has spoken untruthfully of her nothing but his blood can atone for my wounded honor."

So Lavallo proceeded at a rapid pace to the jeweler, Young's. There was in fact only one establishment of the kind in the place, and he had been there. He had never purchased anything very valuable from Young, but was continually buying a souvenir for this one or that one, so that he had come to be regarded as a good customer. This fondness for jewelry was one of his weaknesses.

"Good-morning, Mr. Young," said Lavallo, on entering the store.

"Good-morning, sir. Fine day, but a little warm, take a seat," returned Mr. Young, with a peculiarly obliging and friendly smile.

"I think I shall," added Lavallo, not slow to comply with the solicitation. "If it is warm, we still have much for which to thank the weather."

"For instance what?"

"When we are lazy and do not wish to think or our supply of conversation is limited, it furnishes us a topic to talk about," said Lavallo, indolently.

"Yes, yes," replied Young, slightly blushing, "It's like love, 'ever old yet ever new.'"

"Oh, ah, true! Have you anything new in diamonds?"

"No, sir; the demand for such precious and expensive stones is very light in this section of

the country. In fact, so much so that if I had the rose-colored diamond," said the jeweler, facetiously, "I could leave it where it belongs, in continual darkness. There would be no fear of its losing its color by the inquiries to see it. I have here two pretty diamond rings, which I would sell under cost because they are not appreciated. I can sell any number of gold sets, bracelets, rings with colored glass, crystal trinkets, etc. But when it comes to diamonds, the few who buy send to St. Louis for them; they don't give me a call." He took out of the glass case a tray of rings and showed them to Laval.

"This is a very clear looking crystal," rejoined Laval admiringly.

"By the by, I reset a diamond yesterday for a gentleman. The circlet of gold was too small for his finger, so I made a larger hoop of gold, but placed the stone precisely as it originally was. It was of extraordinary size, a regular beauty; one that could have been placed without disgrace by the side of Mr. Coster's display at the famous Paris Exposition."

"From whom did it come?"

"From Mr. Arnold; how he came by it I cannot tell. These lecturers are sometimes fortune's favorites and have valuable gems given them by friends; oftentimes by fair ones, too. These men of eloquence win their way so easily, though their hearts are often less noble than their words." Thus had the loquacious jeweler in a breath confirmed Arnold's statement—the circumstantial evidence was growing frightfully convicting.

"I shall not buy anything to-day. I have made an appointment," said Lavalley, glancing at his watch. "I must be going."

"Not yet," mentally exclaimed Lavalley, "shall I judge her guilty. No, not guilty if the evidence came from the archangel Raphael. The condemnation must come from her own lips. How my heart quakes with fear at the testimony. Grace must not alone be as faithful as Oriano is represented, but, like Cæsar's wife, must be 'above suspicion.' Why did I not marry her immediately after my arrival?"

The faster Lavalley walked, the faster flew his thoughts, which were suddenly brought to a halt by being confronted with Mr. Feld's house. The scent of the shrubbery, the singing of the birds, the splashing of the fountains, composed his agitated spirit. He walked up to the front door; put his hand on it, which yielded to his touch. He went into the hall with his hat in his hand and gave a knock at the parlor door. "Come in," said a low, plaintive voice. The echo struck sadly on his ear.

Lavalley walked in, and there was Grace on a low ottoman, reclining her head on the sofa. She was dressed in simple white dimity, neatly trimmed with valenciennes lace; necklace, earrings and bracelets of coral set off this plain but becoming attire. She was so white, so still, she scarcely seemed to breathe. His heart was seized with a spasm for his neglect, and a whispering guilt at hers held them both momentarily dumb. She had not seen him since the hypothecation of the jewels.

One, two, three strides, and Lavalie was before Grace. "I am here, my darling, to atone for a few days of inattention"—weeks he should have said. "I know not how it was brought about. I am a barbarian, an ingrate. A life-long of devotion and love, with no secrets between us, do I offer in expiation of my crime; for crime it is to leave one so sweet and fair as you. Come," and he looked beseechingly, "I shall be all candor. Hark! listen, let no one but you hear my humiliating confession. I have been on a dangerous precipice, but not beyond it. I retreated in time, only taking a few glances at the bewitching chasm below. And now I am back." He held out his arms with an imploring gesture.

Grace, shuddering at his being saved from a danger which appeared to her more horrible than words could paint, momentarily forgot her woe, rose from her seat and sank into his arms.

"Come, darling, sit on the sofa beside me and let me see you look up in my eyes. Give me your dear little soft hands," and Lavalie caressed them gently.

"You are forgiven as I hope to be forgiven when I die. Do not worry yourself any more about it. All you must do is to promise me never again to go near that dangerous abyss," rejoined Grace, thinking only of his distress.

"I solemnly declare by all that is holy never in my life to go near that perilous place."

Thus by great tact these two had avoided mentioning Letitia's name. They had not even indicated her by the feminine gender, but simply the

neuter. She was a fearful, frightful spot, a thing to be as much dreaded as hydrophobia.

"My modest little flower," said Lavalie, fondly, "your fragrance and freshness will never die. My love shall always keep you blooming like a rose."

"Your goodness, William, exceeds all bounds," responded Grace, gratefully.

"My love, please do not talk of goodness. You look pale to-day, but the corals will become your pearly face. Happiness will soon bring the flush to your cheek. Your hands, darling, look so white and are so finely shaped."

"William, I painted such a pretty little picture last week. I wish to get it and let you see it."

"Not now; I do not wish any prettier picture than you are. What was I looking at?"

"I am sure I do not remember, William."

"Do not tax your memory, my angel. I know, it was your lovely hands. Nothing is a greater mistake than for women to wear rings on ugly ones. It only renders them more conspicuous. But rings are made to adorn such hands as yours. You must have been absent-minded this morning, as you did not put on your rings."

"I was thinking of you, William."

"I am happy to know, my precious, that you care so much for me; but you must wear the rings. I like to see your emerald surrounded with its island of diamonds; your solitaire flashing and emitting a thousand rays of light as you throw your hands about," said he, playfully—it was the playfulness of the lion,

"You naughty, charming man," responded Grace. "You are so fond of sparkling things."

Lavalle was a little irritated at this unintentional thrust, and replied, "Yes, I like sparkle, whether it is in women, wine or jewels."

"Ah! then there is no hope for poor me," rejoined she, quickly.

"Yes, there is. You will be under my tuition in every way a brilliant woman. I have no fear for you. But go and put on the rings, Grace."

"To-morrow; some other time will do."

"The rings, the rings," continued Lavalle, nervously. "Be so kind as to instantly favor me with the sight of that solitaire for which I paid a fortune to a Brazilian merchant, and a large sum to an Amsterdam lapidary to cut and polish. Come, put on the sparkler."

"Ah!" responded Grace, sadly. "My heart feels little for jewels in these times," and then, with a smile, "all I care for is the return of your love. Why should I be concerned about anything else?"

"I thank you, darling; but just bring out the jewels. I desire to look at all of them. A gentleman showed me a solitaire diamond ring which resembled yours, and he boasted that there was no stone to be found in this town so beautiful as his. I thought yours equally handsome and told him so. Come, gratify me, and let me see if my opinion was correct."

"Oh, let the jewels one and all rest on their velvet beds," said Grace entreatingly, and she turned pale, so pale.

Lavalle flushed. This hesitation provoked him

and confirmed his horrible suspicions. "A truce," said he, "to this idle folly. Bring the solitaire, bring all the diamonds. I wish to gaze upon their brilliant light."

"Well, of course, if you insist upon it I shall get them."

"Yes, I do insist," replied he, with some irritation which he could not conceal.

Grace rose and with a quick, elastic step proceeded to the middle of the room; ah, she would get the diamonds; what a weight from Laval's heart. She was innocent! He was on the point of crying out, "Come back, my darling," when, with a sudden, assumed pettishness, she turned and said, "No, I will not bring them to you now; it will spoil you. It would be yielding too much to grant your slightest wish."

"It is a great wish, Grace. It is of vast importance to me," pleaded Laval.

"Submit to my gentle denial; you are a love, and I know you will. There is nothing of the despot about you."

Laval was far too discriminating not to see through this shallow device. He was agitated and indignant almost beyond control. This girl, apparently all candor, all innocence, all goodness, to resort to such cruel deception bewildered him. She not only did wrong and told a falsehood, but was ready with twenty more plausible untruths to maintain the first one.

He calmed his angry passions as well as he could, and quietly said, "When on that blessed day, dear Grace, you will take the sacred name

of wife, will you not consent to love and obey me?"

"I shall, William; I shall. I promise you when that day comes to obey you in all things, but not now. I must not," and the blue eyes of Grace were like lakes in their tears.

"Why not say like Vashti unto Ahasuerus, 'I must not, cannot, shall not.' Mark me, Grace, I can punish, too."

"Oh, I cannot," said Grace in a broken voice. "Have mercy and do not press this matter."

"I say I must see them," vociferated Lavalles, hoarse with anger and pain.

"I beseech your mercy and pity," and Grace sank on her knees before him.

"Mercy, you piteously cry! What mercy are you showing me, you false one? You are torturing me with red hot irons, searing my warm flesh. Where my heart is not bleeding it is crisping; my blood feels on fire. What a chemist you are! This is my ultimatum—the diamonds or my eternal hatred," and Lavalles sank into a chair overcome with emotion. At this juncture Mrs. Feld, who was in the adjoining room and overheard most of the conversation, came in with a pleasant smile, "My dear William,

so happy to see you. I hope you have been well. I was going to look for you myself if you had not put in an appearance to-day."

Lavalle looked angrily at her and bowed stiffly. "Quite well, madam. I hope you will advise your daughter to see things in their proper light. I wish to see her jewels. For some unknown reason, she will not grant my request."

"Grace, dear, why don't you please Mr. Lavalle? Bring the jewels, I am sure they belong to him," said Mrs. Feld frigidly.

Grace, bewildered, not knowing what to do or what she was saying, wrung her hands, crying, "I cannot."

"Of course you cannot," rejoined Lavalle. "You faithless girl, Arnold wears your solitaire ring on his finger. I should not wonder but that he has *all* the jewels in his possession. What frightful demon made you do this thing? Confess you gave him the ring."

Grace went up to Lavalle, laid her hands on his shoulder, and said, "Believe me, I never gave Arnold any ring or any of the jewels, but dire misfortune compelled me to part with them."

"Away to the deepest pit of Hades," and La-

valle maddened at what he heard, comprehended nothing. He only pictured what a humiliated object he must appear in Arnold's eyes and wanted no further explanation. "Away, you miserable girl," and he shook her off violently as if she were an asp.

"Forgive us," cried Mrs. Feld, who was now thoroughly frightened at the man's wrath. "I brought Grace into this trouble. At least forgive *her*, she only did what I told her to do."

"Forgiveness, you ask! Give me back my wounded honor. I entrusted her with that and she has robbed me of it. I swear by the eternal God that I herewith cast her off and renounce her forever," and Lavalle with a stride of a maniac, left the room without once turning round.

With a low cry Grace sank in a swoon into her mother's arms. Mrs. Feld laid her tenderly on the sofa, wrung her hands, sobbed bitterly and said:

"Henry, what have we done? Heaven help us." She chafed her daughter's hands and brow and applied the most pungent essences to her nostrils. It was long ere life came slowly struggling back and then she fell into convulsions.

Lavalle took advantage of a passing steamer and left the town. "Grace," he mentally exclaimed, "you are hideous in your ingratitude; black and false in your faith and in your Judas kiss. You say you have not given the diamonds to Arnold, but parted with them! How could you—how dare you! May God grant that the pangs of remorse may overtake you and pursue you through life."

Letitia saw Lavalle from her window rushing by, and his agitation convinced her that something unusual must have occurred. She had no time to intercept him, as he had turned the corner ere she reached the gate. "Aha!" said she, "Breakers ahead, now for my sails to go over the rough waters, while the waves engulf the other little craft. To-morrow the victory may be mine!" Letitia felt all the confidence in herself that her words implied. To-morrow!

CHAPTER XXV.

On the day of Lavalley's departure Mr. Feld came home in the evening somewhat earlier than usual. The quietness that pervaded the house, the low murmuring of the domestics as they passed to and fro, struck him with a new terror. Trouble and financial difficulties so beset him that he imagined that no one was ever tortured as he. This silence was too much in conformity with his own melancholy thoughts to be agreeable. In analogous cases contrasts are better than accords, as in discussions opposition is more attractive than assent.

"'Pon my word," said Mr. Feld, "I don't know what is the meaning of this," and he ran upstairs to his wife's room. "Confound it, where is Ruth? I suppose with Grace. I declare, I don't like to see that poor child with her eyes full of tears, but I will have to go after Ruth." He walked along the hall in the direction of Grace's apartment when a figure glided out, saying: "Hush!" accompanied by a warning gesture of admonition.

"What is the matter?" said Mr. Feld in a frightened tone.

"Come with me to my room, Henry," said Mrs. Feld, drawing his arm in hers.

"Now come, Ruth, don't keep me in hot water all night."

"Oh, Henry," she cried, "We are ruined."

"We have been expecting that for a good while," returned Mr. Feld, grimly.

"But Lavalley has thrown off Grace, and is probably already out of town. Did any steamer pass to-day?"

"Two, not one; and as for trains, they go every day."

"Then he is gone, I know, for he acted like mad."

"Why?"

"The jewels."

"Did you not explain matters to him? Why did not Grace beg him to forgive her?" demanded Mr. Feld, sternly.

"It was of no use to talk. He would not listen. He thinks Arnold has her solitaire ring; that he has all her jewels. He has not, has he?"

"What do I know? How can I know anything about these things?" rejoined Mr. Feld in a dazed way.

"Who shall know, then?"

"Ruth, leave me. No, no, Ruth, I mean stay with me. I need you now. Everything turns from me but you."

"Why should I leave you?" said Mrs. Feld, throwing herself into her husband's arms. "I am your wife."

"True, true your place is by my side until I die, even if I carry you down, down, down?" asseverated Mr. Feld.

"I am your wife," reiterated Mrs. Feld. "I will always be your wife."

"I am worn out, Ruth; I never had a friend."

"Why did you not make more of a friend of my brother, Joseph? He does not know how to make money, but he is good, kind and just."

"I never liked him, but I have always treated him well because he is your brother. He has never said anything to me about my habits, but it always seemed as if he wanted to, and it worried me. We are both restless when together. But Grace, poor Grace."

"If I could only live over that night again," groaned Mr. Feld, "I would not do as I had done."

"If I could only live over my past life," moaned Mr. Feld.

"Don't grieve so."

"Ah! my Ruth, many times have I, who should have dried your tears, made you cry and filled your heart with bitterness. Can you forgive me?"

"You have always been tender and good. You have nothing but the diamond business to blame yourself for."

"But that is everything. It comes from my drinking, my gambling, from my own miserable self. You can't comfort me. I am more broken-hearted than our captive ancestors, who hung their harps on the willow trees of Babylon. I have lost everything. Cry on, Ruth, cry on, it will do you good. My child, my child," and this man, once so strong, wept in his agony. These tears were wrung from his heart and should have been as red as blood.

"I must see Grace," said Mr. Feld, suddenly.

"But Grace is sick and you had better wait until morning."

"No, no. I must see her now, no matter how sick she is."

"But she is delirious once in a while. Do wait," urged Mrs. Feld.

"Don't torment me. Get up and come along. How horrible! If Grace should live she will curse me; if she should die God will do so."

"Don't talk so. You don't know our gentle, patient, loving child. She will not say anything you will not like to hear."

"Not in words, but her eyes will follow me everywhere. They will seem to speak and say, 'Give me back my love.' Come, I say." Mr. Feld's stern, authoritative way left his wife no alternative but to obey. A few steps brought them into the chamber of their darling child.

Grace lay on her bed muttering like Enoch Arden, "Cast away and lost." A deep scarlet flush was on each cheek and her eyes had dark rings around them. One hand lay over the counterpane, its whiteness and delicacy enhanced by the ruffle of soft lace that encircled it. Mr. Feld took hold of that burning hand and kissed it. She gazed at him with a wild, feverish look, and withdrew it with a shudder.

"Grace, darling, don't you know your poor father? Won't you speak to me?"

"Is it you, dear William? Thank God you are back again, I will tell you the secret. Hark! let no one hear. Come closer. I pledged the jewels to save my father's honor. Do not tell Arnold. He would take me from you. Do you know I

have prayed incessantly for you to come back and God has answered my prayer. William, if you had not come back to me I know I should have died. You have saved me," and she clung to Mr. Feld, at the same time expressing her affection for Lavallo in the most endearing terms.

"Grace, child, it is your father, who loves you more than life. Look at me. You know me, dear, don't you?"

"Of course I know my father, who induced me to do an unworthy and base action, but he is not here now. You cannot deceive me," and she spoke with all the cunning and positive knowing of the sick.

"Henry," said Mrs. Feld in a low voice, "you must leave the room. This excitement does her harm and she needs quiet. After she has had a good sleep, which I think she will have to-night, you can come to see her. She does not know what she is saying now. I will stay with her."

Mr. Feld left the room with a quick step. All his hopes of future happiness were now completely dead. From no star in the firmament did one friendly ray of light beam for him. Darkness surrounded him and out of it rose menacing phantoms to drive him to despair.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Good-morning, Mr. Everard," said Mr. Feld, walking into the lawyer's office and taking off his hat.

"Glad to see you. Have not seen you for some time," answered Everard, a little nervously.

"My business keeps me tied down; it is almost as bad as love-making. It tires one to talk over the same words without any sense fifty times a day. Love made Lavalley have a bad headache, so he has gone down the river for a few days. Only for the benefit of his health, you know," said Mr. Feld, sharply.

"I hope so."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Mr. Feld, I heard that Mr. Lavalley left yesterday on the steamer."

"What else do the *good* people say?"

"That he left, never to return," said Everard, candidly.

"It's a lie; I say so," said Feld, excitedly.

"You know best. Reports generally grow in many ways. So pay no attention to them."

"You are right, Everard. You may come around to my office to-morrow on business. I am going to take a short trip and when I am gone if anything should require a lawyer, I want you to be engaged."

"Well, Mr. Feld, I do not attend to much commercial business unless it is for a friend."

"Do you think I stand like your friend Berkhoff? His creditors are here. He has failed."

"I do not know anything about your affairs."

"Very well; I tell you, if I was in Berkhoff's situation I would kill myself. I would not let the world have the pleasure of gloating over my misfortunes."

"But that would be cowardly. That instinct, that fear, that natural law of self-preservation, which manifests itself in the highest and lowest creation, causes one to reflect whether it is possible for anyone to commit suicide without being temporarily insane."

"I think that's the point of view from which the happy and prosperous look at it, but I tell you, man, it takes courage to face death voluntarily."

"I think this way: If a man is alone he should be strong enough to battle with troubles; it would be unmanly and sheer feebleness for him to yield to despair. And if a man have dear and loving ties to bind him to this world and he should commit suicide and leave them to struggle with the trials of life which he dare not face, it is cowardly in the extreme."

"You forget that people pity a dead man, but trample on a fallen one, and his family, too."

"A man should live if God is willing and endeavor to retrieve his fallen fortune and lift up his family. That should be his aim. Enough, too, in my estimation, to incite any man to be courageous and live. What does such a one

gain by rushing into death, that deep, dark, mysterious unknown state of which no one who is or ever will be born can say it will be thus and thus. Perhaps the veil is wisely drawn over it. This darkness is the great cataract of the world's vision, and no mortal oculist can remove it."

"That's very fine talk, Everard, but it don't make troubles any lighter to bear. It seems to me I heard a man say once that those wise men of early times thought it honorable to kill one's self."

"Yes, some of them did. In some instances self-immolation was a part of their religion. Sutteeism, in India, which was abolished by the British Government, was a religious ordinance. The prevailing opinion among the philosophers of antiquity was that suicide was justifiable in these three cases: First, it was practiced by those who wished to avoid pain and personal suffering of body and mind; secondly, when a person considered the act as a necessary vindication of his honor, and thirdly, when life was sacrificed as an example to others, and——"

"They were wise, then," interrupted Mr. Feld. "Death wipes out everything."

"Wait a moment, my friend, and I shall show you what they thought was not always right. Well, for instance, if a person is afflicted with an incurable disease and suffers unceasing torture, with the prospect of long, dreary years before him, do you think it requires any courage to terminate his miserable earthly existence, to renew it elsewhere in bliss or to reach total annihilation, as his belief may be?"

"I think it requires nerve," said Feld decidedly.

"Well, I do not. *Felo de se* in such an instance only exhibits the most abject cowardice; an absolute want of belief in God and immortality."

"What are you going to do with the man who does not believe in another life? You see he is not afraid of punishment."

"There still remains the moral obligation he owes to the Author of his being to leave to Him the termination of that existence. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian, says: 'Self-murder is a crime most remote from the common nature of all animals and an instance of impiety against our Creator,'" continued Everard.

"I don't care about all that. I want to know what they did when they lost their honor. That is another question. Answer that."

"I shall," smiled Everard. "Cato comes down to us with a great and unsullied reputation, but would he have been less admired and revered had he waited for the operation of nature and not killed himself?"

"I don't know anything about the man. Just tell me for what he killed himself?"

"Wounded pride forbade him to live and witness Cæsar's (another great man) triumph and probably be the recipient of his favors. Had Cato lived until God had called him, and his noble life been impervious to trials and sufferings which bend and warp the minds of ordinary men, he would have been an illustration of virtue, goodness and resignation for unborn millions."

"Was he a very wise man?"

"To be sure he was. He was a great statesman and philosopher."

"See here, don't tell that story to another man; he might go right off and kill himself. What better can a man do than follow the example of the wise and great? Ha! my friend, you are caught. Speak on."

"I am not caught," returned Everard, coloring. "It shows that the actions of the great and renowned are contagious; therefore, such men are more culpable than the ignorant."

"But all are not great."

"Yes, we are, in a measure. I consider myself greater than some, so do you. It takes a long while to reach the lowest scale of humanity. So we are all held up as models by some others."

"That may be true, but great men when they fall come down from such a height that they can't stand it at all. They give up immediately."

"In many cases the greatness is only imaginary. Have you heard of Napoleon Bonaparte?"

"Yes, the man who took away the liberties and gave liberties to the people of France," said Feld.

"You may be right there. I do not mean that. I refer to his power of enduring troubles."

"I can't see what he had to suffer. Every day people have more trouble," said Feld angrily.

"And I tell you there are numbers of heroes and heroines in all walks of life, but especially among the poor and lowly."

"Well, then, what do you want to do with Bonaparte?"

"Think of him. When hurled from the zenith of glory to the nadir of despair—whose great power built up an empire, created marshals, made and unmade kings—a captive in the hands of his most bitter rival and enemy, England; great, powerful England, who, in the person of her officers stooped to vex and irritate the mighty spirit of the fallen potentate, did he kill himself?"

"Well, what of it?"

"He was a hero and an emperor by his own unrivalled genius. He exhibited to the world the grandeur of his soul, submitting and enduring such petty ills as must have sadly and woefully torn his mighty heart. Think of him as one will, a mighty conqueror, a stern, resolute, relentless man, trampling on nations and individuals, sacrificing their best blood to his inordinate love of power, or as the cruel husband, tearing from his heart the noble and sweet Josephine, all in a kind of mad fury to gratify his unsatiable ambition; view him unmeasurably high or illimitably cruel and grasping, he certainly was great, because he resisted suicide."

"You are a lawyer and make things appear just as you want them."

"But truths are truths. That man, who when the elements of nature and the resources of mankind are combined against him, can calmly fold his hands, bow his head and say: 'Thy will be done,' he is the greatest of all heroes."

"Everard," said Berkhoff, rushing in without ceremony, "I want you. Come over to my store this instant; please do."

Mr. Feld took his hat and walked home. He never raised his head until he found himself in his bedroom. "Ruth is not here," muttered he. "She is with Grace, then. I am weak. I have no strength, otherwise a little powder and a ball would send my soul probably to rest or possibly to misery, what then? My family will be saved from disgrace. I am a ruined man every way—in business, in honor, my child's happiness gone—there is nothing left me but to die. Let me be brave and do my work. My whole life is now passing before me. Horrors! the ugly hours stay the longest and seem plainer than the others. This won't do. I must take some brandy to steady my nerves," and he went to the closet wherein he had concealed a bottle of liquor and drank from it a goodly portion. He then fumbled in his pocket, took out a pencil, tore a piece of paper from his memorandum book and wrote the following lines:

Dear Ruth:

Tired and heart-broken I am going to take my own life. I give it cheerfully, knowing that it is for the good of you and my dear, dutiful daughter. It is the only offering I can make you, my dear wife, for your long years of suffering and love. When Grace is well, smooth over to her my faults, grave as they have been. The world will drop a tear of pity on the suicide's grave; there is no pity for the man who lives and has disgraced his family. In thought I give you and Grace one last parting kiss. I

write with tears. Oh, how bitter to write thus.
Good-bye. Your

HENRY.

Mr. Feld laid the note on the table, took more brandy and as he drank it said: "My life long enemy is at last my friend." He took out of his pocket a pistol, examined it minutely, carefully cocked it, turned it towards himself and pulled the fatal trigger. Though he never studied anatomy, his aim was good, the ball piercing his heart.

"Great heaven! what was that?" cried Mrs. Feld, as the report sounded through the sick room, causing Grace to start up in her bed, pale and frightened, gaze around in a bewildered way and sink back half fainting on her pillow.

"Here, get out of my way," screamed Mrs. Feld frantically to the affrighted servants who, startled by the reverberation, came running into the hall.

"Hannah, Hannah!" cried Mrs. Feld to one of the domestics, "open this door, I cannot. It must be locked," and she stood helplessly wringing her hands.

"It is not locked," said Hannah, as the door opened easily. "I had better go in with you."

"Hannah, my husband!" There lay Mr. Feld on the floor, the pistol by his side. His brow was placid, his mouth almost smiling; for the idea that the deed he was going to do was for the benefit of his wife and child cheered him on his dreary way.

Hannah went to the door and said to the

other domestics: "One of you run for a physician and another for Mr. Rheinberg," then she quietly closed the door and went back to Mrs. Feld.

"He is cold, icy cold," said Mrs. Feld shudderingly. "This touch chills me to the marrow. See his precious blood," she cried, as she tore open his vest. "Hannah, Hannah, I am sinking," and she sank down insensible by his side.

"Here is a note on the table," said Hannah. "I will put that in my pocket. I have not been living in this family ever since they came to this town for nothing. If madam gets well she shall have it, if not I will read it first and if no harm is in it I will give it to Miss Grace. It can't be anything good in it, otherwise he would not have shot himself. I guess I will call some of them to help me as long as this strong camphor that I am rubbing her with so hard don't do her any good."

"Hannah, what are you doing; what is the matter?" said Mr. Rheinberg, coming in, followed by his wife and daughter.

"Terrible, terrible," returned Hannah. "Come help me to carry Mrs. Feld to another room."

With the aid of Mrs. Rheinberg and Letitia, who were ready to act the part of good Samaritans, she was quickly removed and placed on a bed.

"He is dead," said Dr. Harriot, on entering the room and glancing at Mr. Feld, "still I shall examine him carefully. Let us move him to the bed. It is useless to search for the ball, as his

heart has ceased to beat. I suppose there will have to be an inquest."

"Can't he be buried without it? It jars on my nerves; pains me to think of it," answered Mr. Rheinberg.

"I think not. Poor unfortunate man. What could have induced him to commit such a frightful deed?"

"Business troubles, I think. My poor sister. Come into the other room, Doctor, and see her."

"Dr. Harriot," exclaimed Mrs. Rheinberg excitedly, "is my poor sister-in-law dead? She does not seem to breathe."

"Her pulse is fluttering feebly," said the physician, upon examination. "We must now do our best to fan back the spark of life. Here, rub her vigorously while I shall give her a few drops of this elixir," said he, taking a small vial out of his pocket. "Right, girl, to have the spoon ready," as Hannah handed it to him and moved aside.

"Lift her head, Clara," said Mr. Rheinberg.

"Now," said the doctor, "I think she will be better for this medicine, though this shock must have been dreadful. I have treated her before for heart disease."

"She never, to my knowledge, told any one about such a complaint," returned Mr. Rheinberg.

"She forbade me mentioning it," added the physician, "as she did not wish to alarm her family."

"Poor Rúth," exclaimed Mr. Rheinberg

mournfully, "our poor father was taken off with that."

"Hereditary, you see. Quiet now, she moves," said the doctor.

Mrs. Feld opened her eyes, put her hands to her head as if to compose and collect her thoughts, when she gave a fearful shriek and endeavored to jump from the bed. The tragedy, with all its ghastliness and horror, came flashing upon her mind. "My dear husband, my good husband," she cried. His faults were all strewn to the winds. "He who loved me and made my path one of roses, is dead. Not waiting for his Maker to call him, but taking his life in his own hands, he has gone into the presence of the great God. Oh, how wretched he must have been to do the fearful thing, and tear from his heart the last little seed of his religion."

"Are you in pain, Mrs. Feld?" said the physician kindly, as she put her hand to her heart and contracted her brows.

"Yes, my heart is cramped with the most frightful pain. I cannot breathe. Oh, I am——" and she relapsed into unconsciousness.

"I am afraid she will soon pass away. She will never wake up in this life," said the doctor.

"I wonder," whispered Mrs. Rheinberg to her husband, "why Lavalley left town. Didn't you come here this morning before you went to the store?"

"Yes, I did, but couldn't find out a thing. Ruth only looked and talked as if she were miserable. My poor sister, it seems as if only the other day you came from Germany with bright

cheeks and brighter hopes!" groaned Mr. Rheinberg.

"Cease grieving," said Dr. Harriot sympathetically to Mr. Rheinberg, "your sister is at rest."

"You do not, cannot mean——" stammered Mr. Rheinberg.

"I mean that all is over. Death is inevitable."

"Oh, my poor cousin, my dear Grace," screamed Letitia, "how my heart bleeds for you."

"You must be more composed, Miss Letitia," said the doctor quietly.

"I love her like a sister."

"To be sure you do, my good girl. I have known Grace from a child. No better, kinder-hearted girl in town than she is. She requires, too, all the love you can give her. I shall go and see if she is improving. Poor girl, poor girl," said the physician sadly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Who would have thought," said Berkhoff to Everard as the latter entered his office, "that Feld would kill himself? I was never more surprised in all my life."

"I was not. When you called on me day before yesterday he was in my office, you know, and while I was with him he talked of nothing but suicide. If you had not come for me I should have gone up to his house and delicately warned his wife. Lavalley's leaving, I think, affected him deeply."

"And his affairs are as bad as mine, I fear."

"Yes, that may be. He wanted me to take hold, though he denied that he was not perfectly solvent. But I told him I did not care to meddle with his mercantile affairs, poor man."

"I hear the two bodies will be sent on to St. Louis to-day, to be buried in the Jewish cemetery there."

"Yes, they will be laid side by side. I have just come from the house. Dead, dead, man and wife."

"Didn't the newspapers come out heavy on Feld this morning? They didn't spare him because he was a Jew, did they?"

"No, I believe not," said Everard, coloring, "they spare neither the dead nor the living."

"They have had a peg at me, too, but I don't care a fig for that. Heavens, I am ruined," and Berkhoff's face darkened.

"Well," returned Everard, smiling, "are you ruined again? Your creditors have been very lenient, accepted twenty-five cents on the dollar."

"With a verbal agreement that I shall pay the balance when I can and, by heaven! I mean to do it. Those men shall be paid dollar for dollar if I starve for it. I shall be called close and stingy now, but it can't be helped," said Berkhoff excitedly.

"But never mean."

"You always have a good word for me."

"And do you not deserve it, Berkhoff? By your interest in the Nile's case my reputation was established. I am a rising man. I can already select my work," and he grasped Berkhoff's hand warmly.

"You owe me nothing. You are great through your own work."

"Yes, I am in your debt. But tell me from what quarters does danger threaten you now?"

"My Rebecca," groaned Berkhoff. "She has not been feeling well and I had to let a day pass without seeing her on account of my trouble. Well, yesterday I went there and Mrs. Silverbaum told me Rebecca was asleep, that she thought it would do her good. So did I. I told her not to wake her for the world. That remark in the paper, when I think of it, frightens me. Rebecca is so sensitive, so easily hurt. If she should see it I dread to think how she may feel."

And I am afraid that she wasn't asleep that day. Bad news travels fast—runs like wildfire."

"My dear friend, you nearly quoted Milton. In small places there are many to gossip and few to think. I hope that Rebecca will cling to you through all reverses; you would to her I am sure," said Everard indignantly.

"Nothing can happen to her so that I can show my love. She don't bring no money, so she can't lose it."

"Yes, something could happen," rejoined Everard laughing, "she could lose an eye, a limb, or have the small-pox and look hideous. Are you not frightened?"

"No," returned Berkhoff stoutly. "I only wish she would have the small-pox and be all pitted and marked, so I could take her in my arms and tell her I love her in spite of everything."

"Bravo, bravo. Ah! this love which takes hold of us makes us forget everything. We see nothing but that we want to reach our heaven."

"Exactly," said Berkhoff approvingly.

"Berkhoff, take a walk and see Rebecca. You will be better able to attend to business when you come back."

"You are right. There is no work in me now."

"Everard," said Berkhoff, rushing into the lawyer's office an hour afterwards, "what do you think, Rebecca won't see me. Mrs. Silverbaum cold as ice."

"What did she say?" returned Everard with a start.

"She said Rebecca was quite ill from the shock,

and that I should have to wait until she was able to see me. What shall I do about it?"

"Do you know what I should do if I were you?" rejoined Everard cautiously.

"Tell me quickly."

"Leave her alone. Don't go near her. Break the engagement. It is you who deserve pity, not she."

"I can't leave her. I can't live without her. I want to know that when I am through working I can find rest. There is a burning fire within me. Oh, if I was only you."

"And if you were what would you do, my friend?" said Everard kindly.

"I would see her some way, fill her ear with fine speeches, that would bring her around. Everard, you can do a great deal for me," said Berkhoff, wistfully.

"In what manner?"

"By going to see Mrs. Silverbaum and Rebecca and talking to them. You think more of me than anybody else and what you would say would carry more weight, because they think highly of you at the house."

"You do not know what you are asking."

"'Pon my word I do. You are the man who can do it, because it is a delicate matter, and you are a friend. At least you say you are."

"It requires tact and, what is still more, courage, to intrude upon two women and persuade them to act contrary to their wishes. But I told you once if you needed a friend you could rely upon me, and I shall be as good as my word," replied Everard determinedly.

"You give me life. Will you go right away, this minute," said Berkhoff eagerly.

"No, not now. First, it would appear to them as if you had made such an appeal to me; and, secondly, Mr. Rheinberg was just here and entreated me to examine Feld's books. His creditors are here and Rheinberg represents things in a deplorable state. I did not wish to touch the matter, but he pleaded so hard on account of his sick, bereaved, deserted niece that I could not refuse. If we care ever so little for Judaism not you, but men like me, the happiness or misery of our people always interests us."

"Poor girl, what a miserable future is hers! You will do your best. Those creditors will have no mercy."

"Indeed they will not. They are coming, or rather they are here for their own and most probably will not get much out of the wreck. Losses do not soften people's hearts."

"You are right. They are not to blame. I was thinking of that poor girl left by her lover. My heart goes out to everybody who loves and is not loved in return."

"Such people deserve sympathy," answered Everard mournfully. "Leave now, and late this evening or in the morning you shall hear from me."

"Glad to see you in, my dear Mrs. Silverbaum," said Everard, as that lady opened the door for him.

"Oh, Mr. Everard, is it you? Walk in, take a seat. Rebecca," called out Mrs. Silverbaum, "a

gentleman wishes to see you. Very hot tonight."

"Plague take her haste in calling that girl. I must hurry," mentally exclaimed Everard. "It is intensely warm," said he aloud. "My dear Mrs. Silverbaum, I am sorry your daughter has been indisposed, but glad she is better and able to see me."

"The spells they come on at times, Mr. Everard. My darling Rebecca she suffers ever so much."

"Physical pain, eh?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean has she pains anywhere, her heart for instance?"

"Yes, it is of the heart. Too many dying."

"True, 'times are sadly out of joint.' I hope they will soon be better, my dear madam."

"My Rebecca, she suffers more, the losses, the ruin, everybody broke. I wish she wouldn't have so much heart."

"My dear Mrs. Silverbaum, that article is rare in the world. I pray heaven it will not grow still less."

"Less, you say? You are always too good to everybody. You make too many excuses."

"To tell you the truth, my dear Mrs. Silverbaum, I cannot make too many excuses for one person, and that is my friend, Berkhoff."

"Berkhoff is one good man, but he cannot live from that. He lost his money and pays nobody."

"Yes, that honest man has lost his money; he

pays his creditors a certain portion now, but they will receive the full amount eventually."

"And my Rebecca stay engaged some two, three, five years! No, you are much mistaken."

"Berkhoff is more than willing to marry her immediately."

"Oh, it is no match for my Rebecca. She is too young for him."

"But, my dear Mrs. Silverbaum, you were willing your daughter should marry him a week ago. He has not grown so much older in that short time."

"Good-evening," said Rebecca, coming in.

"I am glad to see you looking so well, Miss Silverbaum. I was alarmed this morning when Mr. Berkhoff told me you were too indisposed to receive him."

"I had a nervous headache and wouldn't have received the President," returned Rebecca haughtily.

"Quite right, Miss Rebecca, but if you will receive Berkhoff, he will be here in half an hour."

"Pray don't trouble yourself, Mr. Everard. You must not take too much exercise in warm days."

"Miss Rebecca, let me tell you candidly, that not alone in the eyes of the people, but in the eyes of the law a girl should receive her intended husband before another man."

"I am not sick now; I was this morning."

"Well, do you think Berkhoff may venture to come to see you to-morrow?"

"I can't tell what I shall do to-morrow or any

other time. 'We are the creatures of circumstances,' said Rebecca laughing.

"Now, do like a sensible girl make up your mind to receive Berkhoff. It is your bounden duty to do so."

"Well, I declare, Mr. Everard, it is not every young lady that would take such talk from you," said Rebecca frowning.

"If I have been rude, I beg your pardon, but I beg you to be a little more lenient towards my friend. He is too good a person to be trifled with."

"Rebecca, tell Mr. Everard what you mean."

"Will he sue me for breach of promise?" cried Rebecca, frightened.

"Of course not," and Everard threw himself back in his chair and laughed heartily. "You are mistaken in Berkhoff altogether. He would not give you one moment's pain or inconvenience if he could avoid it for anything."

"But I never wanted, never cared for him; mother persuaded me," rejoined Rebecca, looking down.

"My, Rebecca, how you talk. You went often to his store. You said: 'Berkhoff is a good man, but a little old.' I say: 'That's no matter, he is a business man, has money,' that was true," said Mrs. Silverbaum.

"What else did you say, mother? Come, now, tell all. I do not want Mr. Everard to have such a bad opinion of me."

"Well, I said my cousin she married a rich man, she didn't love him. Her mother said: 'Never mind, Minna, that comes afterwards.'

And it did. She lives in New York, a great lady. I married the man I loved and was unhappy. He was not kind to me because he was too poor. So, I told Rebecca, Berkhoff has got money, marry him."

"My dear ladies," returned Everard, "a poor man does not necessarily make a good husband, or a rich man a bad one. Even where there is not love between man and woman before they are married, congenial qualities engender it after marriage. People are sometimes deceived in it, as in everything else. They get the imitation for the genuine. I hear Miss Feld is very ill. Poor girl, I pity her."

"See, Mr. Lavalley, when he knew trouble came he ran off and leaves that poor girl," said Mrs. Silverbaum.

"That is just it, my dear madam. What do you think of him deserting a girl in the direst extremity."

"And after being engaged so long, too. I think it perfectly horrid," returned Rebecca, carried away by her feelings.

"Well, now, my dear ladies," added Everard triumphantly, "reverse the case and think how 'horrid' it would be if poor Berkhoff were deserted by the girl he loves so devotedly. You may depend upon it, the world would indulge in the same cry."

"I have never in all my life seen anyone like you, ma. You make so many blunders," added Rebecca angrily.

"My, Rebecca."

"Excuse me, ladies, what is the use of this

recrimination? Miss Rebecca, do as you would have others do and take the man who loves you. He is honest and will pay off every cent."

"And I am to work with him and help him pay off his debts contracted prior to marriage?" screamed Rebecca.

"But not prior to engagement. You have been engaged to him a long time, and his embarrassment arose subsequent to that."

"And all this you want me to do for a man I do not love?" sobbed Rebecca.

"Yes, I ask you to do this. Your own heart, naturally good, should prompt you to avoid what is wrong," replied Everard relentlessly.

"I can't see the wrong," said Rebecca stubbornly.

"Now let me show you. When you were betrothed to Berkhoff—putting love aside—you should have considered that if misfortune befell him you would have no right to desert him."

"I did not think that he would have much trouble. I admit I was wrong there, but my youth and inexperience——"

"Well," interrupted Everard, smiling, "a girl is not expected to have much experience in matrimonial matters. Mothers should guide their daughters."

"You hear, ma. It is your fault."

"Never mind, Miss Rebecca, your mother did not lead you much astray."

"I thought it was for your good, Rebecca. Now I tell you again it is *not* for your good," said Mrs. Silverbaum.

"My dear Mrs. Silverbaum, two wrongs do

not make a right. You should influence your daughter to do her duty. The world will not regard her as a heroine, but as a good, conscientious girl, who having been affianced to a man, is not so mercenary as to desert him when misfortune comes."

"Ma, Mr. Everard is right. It is bitter, it is terrible for me to endure, but it is my duty. I dare not go back on my plighted faith," said Rebecca, covering her face with her hands and sobbing convulsively.

"Bravo, my dear girl," said Everard gently. "Do not think I do not feel for you. My heart is affected with compassion at your grief, but if you were my own sister I would not advise you otherwise, because this is the honorable course. If Berkhoff had been found wanting in the qualities that belong to a good and honest man, I should say, cast him off; but to do so simply because he is unfortunate would be a real wrong."

"Mr. Everard, you talk too much. Rebecca, are you mad? You marry that man and I shall not live with you. You live by yourself."

"Quite right, my dear Mrs. Silverbaum. You are growing old and need rest; you board in the hotel, and let the two build a nest for themselves," said Everard coolly.

"Yes, build with what, with what?" cried Mrs. Silverbaum; "a nice nest that will be."

"Don't you fear, Miss Rebecca, land is cheap here, and the nest you shall have. When shall Berkhoff call—to-night?"

"No, no, not now, not to-morrow, in a week.

Give me time to compose myself so that I shall be able to receive him as I should," returned Rebecca, weeping afresh.

"Good-bye, Miss Rebecca; remember, you have my warmest sympathy and I shall ever be your sincere friend. You must excuse me for this liberty I have taken to-night. It was for a friend."

"He sent you. You are silent, and that means yes," said Rebecca.

"I shall put you in an agreeable light. Berkhoff will love and appreciate you more than ever. Mrs. Silverbaum——"

"Good-night, good-night," interrupted she. "Rebecca don't mind her mother. She is too soft-hearted."

"Miss Rebecca is worth a gold mine. Good-night."

"Poor girl," muttered Everard as he walked homeward. "With a different mother she would never have acted in this manner. But I am surprised that she acts so bravely now. She deserves great credit. Ah, Rebecca, you shall have a little nest for your wedding present. Such goodness or rather such resistance to wrong deserves recognition. Thank heaven my business is so prosperous that I can occasionally indulge in a little extravagance. How happy Berkhoff will be when I bring him the happy news of 'my Rebecca.'"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In this trial of double bereavement Grace, though her relatives were around her, was alone. None living but she and Arnold knew the cause of Laval's desertion, and Arnold determined to remain silent, watch and wait. He argued with himself thus:

"The girl with youth and strength must recover and, finding herself bereft of parents, abandoned by her lover, and no money, she will naturally look for some one to lean upon. I shall be her oak. There are no more Richmonds in the field. I shall be wary and bide my time."

Sister Louise came often to see Grace and she alone had the courage to tell her, when convalescent, that she was an orphan. The nun did it with that rare tact found only in the refined and sympathetic religieuse. Her voice and touch thrilled Grace with the same charm as in the days of her childhood.

"Mary," said Grace, when she called upon the former, "I am so miserable. It was only my will which gave me strength to-day to drag myself here to see you."

"You, poor dear, you look pale, weak and thin. Sit down in this comfortable chair. It does me good to look at you resting."

"Ah! Mary, I owe you many thanks for your

kindness and devotion to me during my sickness. They tell me you were up day and night," and the tears came into the eyes of Grace.

"Never mind that. I believe it did not hurt me. I am as strong as ever. Grace, you must try and rally."

"I do not know how to account for it. I can scarcely live in my uncle's house. Uncle is very, very good to me; aunt is so, too, in her way. I really am ashamed to say what I wish after his kindness in bringing me to his house."

"Well, you need not be ashamed of me. Open your heart to your friend."

"The happy laughter of uncle's innocent children jars on my nerves."

"No wonder in your state, but that feeling will pass away, dear."

"When I hear Letitia's silvery voice," resumed Grace, "it recalls painful memories of happy days gone by. When she comes near me with her soft caresses, I feel as if the deadly cobra enfolded me." I think she must be sensible of my shuddering."

"The hypocrite! She took Mr. Lavalley from you."

"Sometimes I feel as if I must weep my heart out. I see nothing before me but a vast desert without an oasis to relieve its aridity. Its burning heat consumes me," and Grace sank back in her chair.

"You must cool yourself at some refreshing fountain."

"Where is the fountain of pure, sweet water?"

"In the convent or even here you may find it.

I wish my parents were able to keep you," sighed Mary.

"Hush, friend. It is more than enough that I have to depend upon my relatives. Not a dollar saved out of my poor father's estate. Fearful, fearful. Oh, that I could eat of the lotus and forget my misery. My tears will come."

"Weep, Grace, weep, but you must rouse yourself; as do the elements, human passions must spend their fury before they are calmed. Better that they rage for a time than that we should drift into insanity."

"You remember in Victor Hugo's '*Les Travailleurs de la Mer*,' in speaking of the mystery and savageness of the ocean, he charges it with 'hyprocrisy' and that when the water closes over the doomed mortals, it 'puts on an air of unconsciousness and smiles.' Fate acts that way with me, she is indifferent to my reproaches, cries of agony and despair. Oh, unhappy me!"

"Do you go often to see Sister Louise?"

"Indeed, I believe I should die if I did not. I do not think my aunt likes it very well, either. I would I could live forever with the dead past."

While Grace was pouring out her lamentations into the ear of Mary Moss, Mr. Rheinberg came home to his twelve o'clock dinner.

"Where is Grace?" he inquired as he sat down to the table.

"Where she always is, I suppose. Now that she can walk she is continually running to see Mary Moss or to the convent to see Sister Louise. I think we should put a stop to that convent running," said Mrs. Rheinberg angrily.

"Pooh, pooh!" answered Mr. Rheinberg, good naturedly. "Clara, you have too much orthodox feeling in you yet. Sister Louise is a good woman, she has been her schoolmate and friend for years. Grace, poor girl, has had trouble enough to turn many a stronger brain. Don't be so foolish to take away the only comfort she has outside of here. And Mary Moss was a very good friend to her in her illness, as you well know."

"I think mother is right," chimed in Letitia.

"If she would only help a little in the house," continued Mrs. Rheinberg, "her mind would be occupied. It would be much better for her, too, than always going to the convent and to Mary Moss's. I have never seen the like; how changed she is. She doesn't care for anything; only wants to be let alone. I should like to be let alone, indeed I should, but my duties won't let me alone."

"Leave her alone. When her grief has worn itself out she will, without being told, take up those little cares which would be a burden to her now. Have patience with the poor thing, Clara."

"It is very well for you to talk of patience. With so many children and such responsibilities, I have another destitute girl on my hands who is worse than a child."

"Clara, you must not talk that way. I won't have it. It is a shame," added Mr. Rheinberg angrily.

"Well, well, she makes me angry. She has never given me a word of thanks since we have taken her into the house. She sits down

from morning until night and cries and dreams, and you come home and preach patience."

"I tell you she must take her own time about these things," said Mr. Rheinberg decidedly.

"I say it is selfish in Grace. Look at our Letitia, gay as a lark, always with a song in her throat. Once upon a time when she did not have as much as her cousin, I thought her discontented, but now that tables are turned, Grace will not be reasonable. I would even do more for her than I do, but she accepts nothing more than she can help; she draws within herself like an oyster into its shell. So I cannot help complaining. You see, Arnold might have married her after a while, but he grew tired of calling again and again, and she never once came in to see him. So now that chance is gone, for he has left town," added Mrs. Rheinberg.

"Let him go. Arnold has been kind, offering all kinds of things to Grace, but can you wonder at the poor girl's dislike to suitors after Laval's unaccountable behavior?" said Rheinberg indignantly.

"Mother," rejoined Letitia, laughing, "you had better say nothing more. And, papa dear, though you are very good and not easily excited, yet, when provoked, manage to generate gas enough to explode a mine! Isn't that so? And even if I am in the wrong, you are not angry with me for telling you, are you?"

"Not a bit angry, dear. I wonder what could have made Laval act that way?" said Mr. Rheinberg.

"Why, of course he heard what was going to

happen to poor uncle, and did not want Grace when he comprehended how affairs stood. At least it could not be anything else, I think," returned Letitia, slightly flushing.

"That just reminds me that Arnold showed me a note he had for ten thousand dollars against Henry. He never presented it. He told me not to mention it to Grace, for fear she would consider herself under obligations to him. So, you all be sure and say nothing to her about it. Now the people here call him a gambler and Lavalley was thought to be, by Jew and Gentile, a perfect gentleman. See the actions of the two men," and Mr. Rheinberg put down his glass of water with such decided emphasis that it was emptied of half of its contents, much to the amusement of the children, who were taught to be seen and not heard.

"Do you know, Joseph, I teased Grace for half an hour yesterday, trying to find out what was the cause of Lavalley's leaving, but I could get no more satisfaction out of her than if she were stone. Such a girl!"

"Clara, business calls me, but let me beg of you to leave the poor girl alone. Either she knows it and don't want to tell, or she don't know it and can't tell. At all events, respect her wishes. She will tell you what she wishes to and that is enough."

"I am sure, Letitia, I don't mean to be cross to Grace," said Mrs. Rheinberg, as her husband left the house, "but it makes me nervous to see her moping about as she does. In a few hours she will come back looking white and

shaking her head at everything, as if she had no tongue. She makes me think of funerals."

"Her poems are elegies, monodies and threnodies," returned Letitia somewhat sadly.

"Don't talk unintelligibly," said Mrs. Rheinberg tartly, as she proceeded to some household affairs.

Grace lived months in a state of stupor and despondency. All at once she roused herself and began to think of the salvation of her soul. Though really blameless in all her conduct, whenever the transaction of the jewels flashed upon her, her conscience smote her as though she were guilty and she could not still its reproaches.

The winter passed, and on a dull, blustering day in the month of March, Grace found herself again on the convent road. The north wind blew through her closely drawn veil and kissed her cheeks with all the vehemence of a lover. It had been trying hard to snow all day and a snowflake fell on her face and mingled with her tears. The day recalled a different scene some few years ago when she went skipping along with laughing eye and buoyant spirit, when the wind was as unceremonious and took the same liberties as it did to-day. She hastened to the dear, old, familiar place, fragrant with sweet memories.

"Dear Grace," said Sister Benedicta, "how do you feel to-day? This weather is too sharp for you."

"Oh, no," returned Grace, with a wan smile—the nuns were the only ones who could make her

do so—"it does me good. When I see your dear, calm faces I feel better."

"Do you know, dear, who would like to see you very much?"

"Who?"

"Ann Miller, who is now the most exemplary girl in the building," replied Sister Benedicta.

"I do not want to see her now. Give her my love. I am not worthy yet to come among good children. Alas! what an example am I?" said Grace mournfully.

"Poor child, you never did a wrong action, I am sure."

"You do not know my sorrows."

"Yes, we know a great deal," for her lover's desertion was known even within the convent, "and all sympathize with you. Mother Therese prays for you."

"I thank her. You are all very kind to me. Good-bye, I am going to see Sister Louise," and Grace passed on.

"Was that Grace Feld?" asked Sister Bridget, joining Sister Benedicta.

"Yes, poor thing, she is sadly changed. Those men make trouble enough in the world."

"If the women were wise they would do as we and leave them to themselves. We are not slaves," said Sister Bridget snappishly.

"The bell rings, duty calls," laughed Sister Benedicta.

Adjoining Sister Louise's room was an oratory, and there she was often to be found engaged in her devotions. The walls of the apartment were decorated with the pictures of saints,

in the center was an altar with a large crucifix above it; on one side was a statue of St. Joseph and on the other of the Virgin, the latter crowned with golden ornaments. The carpet on the platform before the altar was worn threadbare by the knees of daily penitents.

Into this small chapel Grace wended her way, and there was Sister Louise praying, her features shining with a light more attractive and beautiful than sunshine. It was the glowing emanation from a pure heart. Storms could not shake her. She had bidden adieu to the world; broken all ties on earth. She lived for nothing and for everything.

Grace looked at her who was enjoying "the peace that passeth understanding" and murmured, "Would I had that gentle temperament and placid heart."

Sister Louise finished her prayers before addressing Grace, but not without invoking Jesus to turn that gentle heart to "the true catholic faith, the only one which leads to heaven."

"My dear child, how pale you look."

"My parents," sobbed Grace.

"Is it possible that you cannot be resigned to the Divine will? Are they not"—and Sister Louise stopped confused, she could not comfort her with her words, "in heaven," but quickly recovering from her embarrassment, which was not even perceived by Grace, she continued: "Does not 'the Lord chastise those whom he loveth?' God called your parents away; other worldly sorrows are mere nothings. Come, dry your tears

and have more faith. 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.'"

Trials had come early to Sister Louise. She had experienced little love at home, as her mother had died in her infancy. Her father, controlled by the fascinations of his second wife, who detested his child, barely tolerated her in his presence. Upon entering the convent she was told to smother and bury the emotions of her heart and live only for duty. She smothered her feelings, but could not bury them. She cut off the shoots, but could not tear up the roots. She loved every human being, every dumb animal, all moving things.

"Sister Louise, you know not of what you speak," and the poor girl, momentarily aroused out of her lethargy, lost control of herself.

"To lose a lover, to be engaged to another, to have at one time parents and lover equally anxious to gratify every wish, all at once to be deprived of everything, to have one of your own kindred deceive you, to be deserted and despised by your lover, to lose your parents, to be a criminal in action if not in intent, I say it is, oh God, maddening. I tremble lest my reason should give way." Grace pressed her hands to her temples and rushed to the door, her eyes distended and her whole frame quivering with excitement.

"Come back," cried Sister Louise, running and grasping her by the hand.

"Sit down and I shall sit beside you," and with mesmeric touch she pressed her cool hands on Grace's burning forehead.

"Sister Louise, what shall I do?" and she laid

her head on the nun's shoulder and sobbed vehemently.

The good sister kissed that golden, luxuriant hair, which Lavalley had so often admired and fondled, and lovingly stroked her hands and face. She had heard Grace utter the word "criminal," and could not imagine what she could have done to accuse herself, when, remembering the girl's wavering disposition, she shuddered and apprehended that she had strayed from virtue's path. If she had only entered the convent, then she would have been free from the snares that beset the weak and unwary in this wicked world, were Sister Louise's cogitations. "Pacify yourself, my dear Grace. You endanger your health by such violent outbursts of grief. Your hands are hot and feverish."

"What do I care for health? These hands, though not stained with blood like Lady Macbeth's, are still black with guilt."

"My sweet child," rejoined Sister Louise, who had only one thought in regard to self-accusation, "you were always so trusting, if—if anyone has betrayed that confidence, think not of him. Remember, 'Though thy sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow' when you are baptized."

Grace, who did not comprehend to what the nun was alluding, replied: "Kind friend, I am the unscrupulous, recreant one; I have betrayed the trust placed in me. I cannot stand the remorse any longer. I will confess to you what it is that tortures and devours my peace of mind."

"I have no power to absolve you from sin.

"Oh, if you were only a Catholic, then our good father confessor could ease and pour 'the balm of Gilead' into your wounded spirit."

"No, no, I want no priestly confessor. My aunt is good enough, but she has not that sympathetic forbearance, that yearning over me, which she might have or that discriminating sense of justice which you possess. If my dear, good uncle were alone I could tell him, but with Letitia at his side, whom I despise, detest, abhor," and her passion rose at each word, "I cannot. I would rather die than have her hypocritical regrets mocking me in my misery."

"Well, if you must," continued the nun, "proceed."

"God forgive," said Grace, brokenly and with tears, "for speaking disparagingly of the dead, but my father gambled and lost heavily. At the instigation of that base man, Arnold, the lecturer, he played cards with him, lost and gave him a note for twenty thousand dollars, payable in three days. I could not, dared not, ask Lavalley, for my perfidious cousin had made him cold towards me, you understand."

"Too well," murmured the sister.

"To save my father I hypothecated all my jewels. Arnold, in some manner, obtained my large solitaire diamond ring and Lavalley left me with curses and God has fulfilled them."

"What a horrible man that lecturer must be. What could have induced him to endeavor to part you and Mr. Lavalley?"

"His motive was vengeance. The villain had

proposed to me, knowing that I was engaged, and I rejected him with scorn."

"Terrible revenge. 'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord," added the sister softly.

"You see," said Grace with a ghastly smile, "I am my own surgeon. I have cut away the dead flesh and brought the ulcer to full view."

"Has the time expired in which you could redeem the jewels?" anxiously inquired the nun.

"It has. The bank, where I pledged them, is dissolved, the cashier gone to parts unknown and Arnold, I think, is in possession of all the jewels. I am of the opinion that he must have been in collusion with the cashier, and that the other officers of the bank knew nothing of the affair, as the business was transacted at night," said Grace, shivering. "Have I not suffered, do I not suffer?"

"You have and must still suffer, but there is hope."

"If I had a fortune showered upon me I would use it in mitigating the woes of others and relieve my overburdened conscience. If my country were involved in war I would sacrifice myself on the altar of patriotism, by being in the thickest of the battle, attending to the wounded, dying and dead."

"At present, dear Grace, nothing demands a martyr to its cause."

"Now you know all. Are you not terribly shocked at my crime?"

"I am deeply grieved," answered the nun evasively.

"If the world knew it, how it would shrink from me!"

"It will only cause me to draw closer the folds of my affection and friendship," replied Sister Louise warmly.

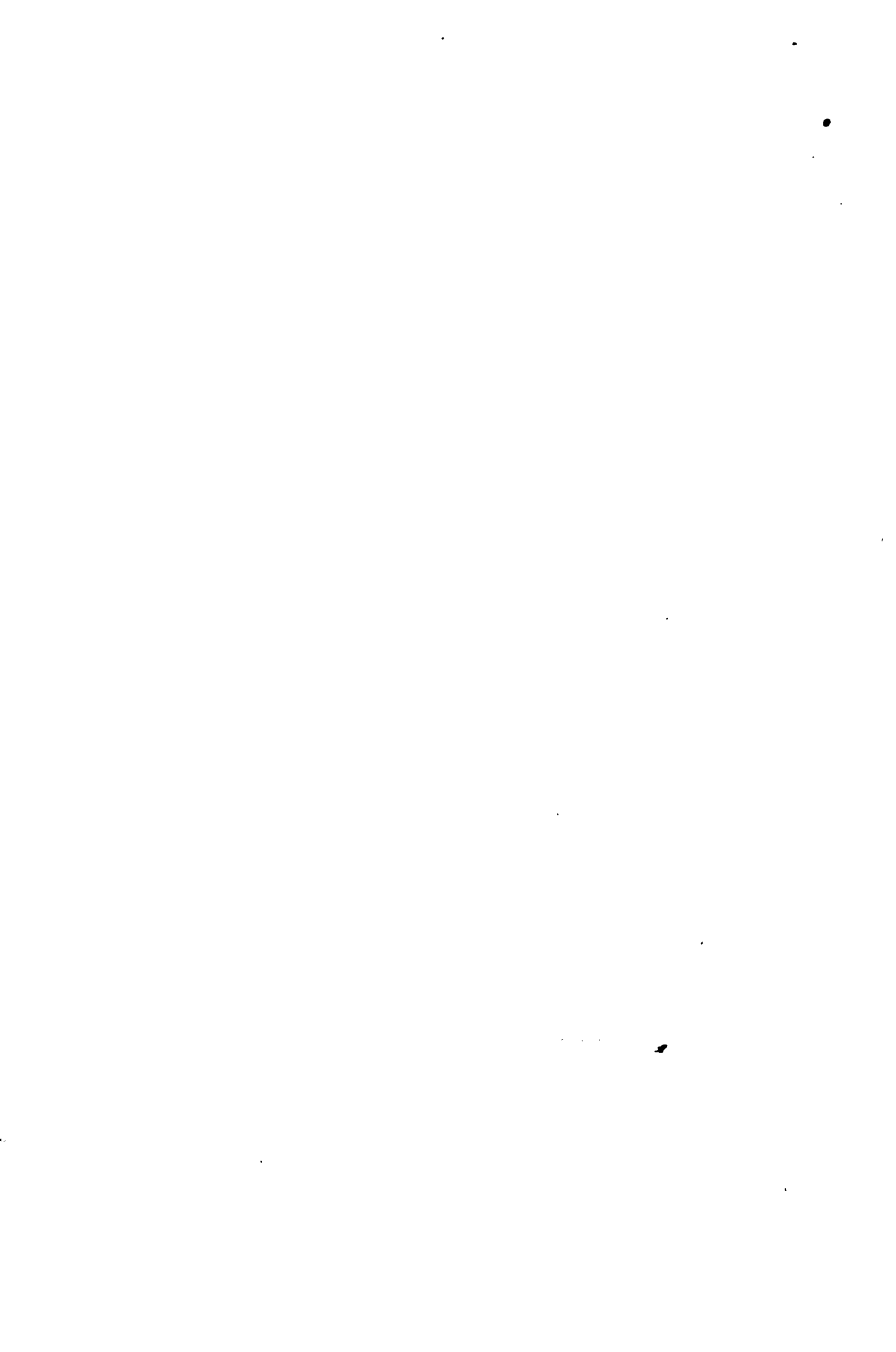
"I knew you would, but my soul seeks a cure. I must have something, if not to eradicate, at least to assuage the pain of my mind."

"Dear child, if you were only one of us, our good father would give you some heavy penance for body and soul. What matters the corporeal part, food for worms, provided the soul is saved. We are all sinners and there is absolution for you. As Christ says, 'He who is guiltless let him throw the first stone.' In this peaceful asylum you will find that comfort and encouragement which our blessed religion alone can give. Grace, you are weary and thirsty, come take rest and refresh yourself with the drink I offer you. If you return to the world again and it should discover your secret, it will condemn you; and alone with your conscience remorse will kill you. Come, I say, into the motherly arms of the church that awaits you, that cares not for your past. Be a bride of Christ, a sister of mine and you will live and die in holy content." The nun had changed her position and was prostrated on her knees before her young friend.

Grace listened to her cry of entreaty with bated breath and wavering strength. She turned her head and with a low moan said: "No, not yet, I must go home. I feel exhausted and confused. I know no longer what is right. I cannot think. Say no more to me now," and with a



"Grace, you are weary and thirsty."



hot and hurried kiss on the sister's brow she rushed from the room.

Sister Louise looked after her with a satisfied smile, saying: "She hesitates, she wavers, she is lost—to be saved!" She dropped on her knees and uttered, with the deepest devotion, a prayer of thanksgiving to her patron saint for her friend and the increase of the Catholic faith.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Grace returned home dispirited, cold, fatigued and breathless. Her volition, never strong, staggered under the weight of remorse. She imagined she espied from afar the coveted ease for which her soul yearned. Her will was almost dormant; nothing but some great shock could arouse it.

Mrs. Rheinberg, who could not read the struggle of the girl's mind, was provoked that another day was lost. "What will become of you?" she cried. "You are a foolish girl, whining and crying like an overgrown baby, and running to the convent like a fanatic, instead of staying at home and making yourself useful. The bread to bake, the children to wash, the dinner to cook and——"

"And poor me," spoke Letitia, unceremoniously interrupting her mother, "pricking off the ends of my fingers. My machine needle broke and it was too blustering for me to go for another. Every poor woman doomed to make trousers and petticoats as I have to do, should bless Howe, or rather the man who gave him the idea of the sewing machine."

"Yes," resumed Mrs. Rheinberg, "my Letitia has to work the roses off her cheeks and you cry yours off. It is high time for you to change your ways."

"Gracious me, Grace, you look wan and sick. Here is a glass of fresh milk," said Letitia, with momentary compassion towards the unhappy girl, whom she had endeavored to supplant.

Grace drank the milk. It refreshed her and gave her the courage to say: "Yes, cousin, I am sick, but I hope soon to be much better"—in heaven she thought—"and then it will be so much better for aunt."

Mrs. Rheinberg, after the ebullition of her wrath, was already at work, had forgotten her niece's presence and did not hear the last remark. The little cousins of Grace now flocked around her, one here, one there.

"I went out with papa to-day to the place where they put dead people, and I saw such pretty stones all covered with white roses, pictures and letters. Papa said he had a stone like one of them put over Auntie Ruth's and Uncle Henry's graves in St. Louis. Good papa, me like him," said a little toddler of some four years of age, who had the observation and acumen of one much older.

Grace burst into tears. Her heart smote her at the thought that her mind was so engrossed with herself that she had neglected to ask her uncle whether he had a monument erected over her parents' graves or not.

"Here, you little prattler," said Mrs. Rheinberg, coming in and taking the child in his arms, and swinging him over his shoulders, a feat of which both father and child were proud, "have you been tormenting cousin Grace?"

"No, me did not pinch her, me did not slap her,

me only told something about those nice stones we saw to-day. She is thinking of her papa and mamma."

"Hush, darling Reuben. You must not talk so."

"Do not chide him, dear uncle. My heart overflows and my tears run afresh at the tribute of affection which your kind heart has placed over my parents' graves. Dear uncle, how can I ever repay you for all your goodness to me?"

"Tut, tut, child. All I ask of you is to stay with us a little more, be a bit more cheerful and throw away your trouble," replied her uncle, with moistened eye. "You have grieved long enough? Every one must die as well as your dear parents. Don't look at the dark side, but where the sun is. We can't any of us have what He above gives us. I think you are beginning to take it in that light." He believed it was so, because it was the first time since she had been in the house that she had expressed any affection.

"Any news in town to-day?" inquired Letitia.

"Yes, my beauty," for in Mr. Rheinberg's estimation his daughter was beautiful and a pearl above price, "some one arrived in town this afternoon. Come, guess. Let me see how long it will take you."

"I am sure I have not the least conception, so it would be useless for me to try. But I do wish some one would come who could and would relieve me of this monotonous existence, this vegetating. I detest this country town with its one

thoroughfare of stores and a few private streets, and these not half lighted up."

"But we have orchards and gardens overloaded with fruits and flowers. We can drive in a little buggy, if we have one, miles and miles, and pass the homes of the honest, substantial farmers, dressed in jeans, indeed, but strong, healthy and happy. And their wives and children the same," answered the father.

"But here we have no parks, no boulevards with brilliant equipages, no grand balls, no gorgeous dressing. And see our theatres, only a miserable hall with chintz curtains; wooden benches for velvet chairs! A few amateurs dignified by the title of 'Thespians,' poor substitutes for a Rehan, Warfield or Tetrassini. Rural scenes cannot compensate me for the pleasures of a city. It is grand in St. Louis."

"But only think, Letitia, of the hungry, of the many crimes that take place in those streets in large cities. Those lights only cover them as a velvet pall thrown over a coffin hides what is underneath."

"No use of talking, father. You cannot convert me to your way of thinking, so please tell me who the new arrival is. It takes too long to guess, so you see I am as inquisitive as any of Eve's daughters. I shall give you kisses for the name of the man," and Letitia repeatedly kissed her father, through which pleasing operation he closed his eyes and then replied, "Charmer, it is Arnold."

"Indeed!" returned Letitia with sparkling eyes.

"He is an agreeable man; makes plenty of money," added Mr. Rheinberg, "but some say he is fast."

"I suppose they refer to his gambling propensities. He does gamble," said Letitia, looking at her cousin.

Grace heard the name of Arnold with a shudder. He had parted her from Lavalley, indirectly caused the death of her parents and sunk her into the depths of misery.

"Yes, girls," resumed Mr. Rheinberg, "Arnold said he would drop in and see us this evening. He has a great liking for this town, and very clever he is, too. His lectures seem to me very fine. If I could only write like that. But I must remember, 'Shoemaker, stick to your last.'"

"For heaven's sake, papa," answered his daughter with a frown, "don't quote those horrid, vulgar sayings, and they lack even truth sometimes. Should Andrew Johnson have stuck to his needle or Abraham Lincoln to his ax? Those are truly great who, born and bred to lowly things, yet rise through their merit to eminence and honor."

"Well, well, child, have it your own way. You have more book learning than I have. You see things in a different light and are generally right. But, Grace dear, you must come back. Don't stay in your room to-night," said Mr. Rheinberg as he observed his niece preparing to leave. "Arnold will be here."

"Dear uncle, my head aches frightfully. You must excuse me this evening."

"I thought you were going to try and be more cheerful."

"But I feel so miserable," and tears came to her eyes.

"If you are sick, dear, go to bed. He will come again. He thinks the world of you," answered Mr. Rheinberg.

"Good-night," said Grace shudderingly.

"And your supper," added Letitia.

"I do not wish any."

"Poor girl, if she could only make up her mind to it, company would do her good," said Mr. Rheinberg, shaking his head and sighing.

"Yes, I wish to heaven she would come down, and that Arnold might fancy this weeping girl and take her off my hands," said Mrs. Rheinberg.

"There, no more. I have no patience with such talk," returned her husband.

When Arnold came his first inquiry was for Miss Feld, and when told by Letitia that Grace was suffering from a headache and that she had changed very much since the death of her parents, he entreated Mr. Rheinberg to persuade her to see him.

"Certainly, certainly, I will," returned Mr. Rheinberg, readily.

"Time should already have somewhat subdued her grief. I wish to convince her that I love her. I am not ashamed of my honorable love," declared Arnold, slightly flushing. "I have loved her from the day I first saw her. Of course, she was sacred then, but my love has survived the

storm and shipwreck of fortune. I am now ready to consecrate my life to her."

"This is manly, this is good," replied Mr. Rheinberg enthusiastically. "Take my word, I will do my best for you."

"Thank you, thank you, Rheinberg; if I can do anything for you, depend upon me," answered Arnold warmly.

"Do you intend lecturing again?" inquired Letitia.

"Yes, I shall give a series here and in the adjacent towns, too. I am going to remain here off and on for some time."

"I assure you," returned Letitia, "you will be rapturously welcomed. The town people are ready to deify you."

"Are the ladies so gracious, too?" asked Arnold, laughing.

"They are always the first, you know, to recognize talent," replied Letitia, smiling sweetly.

"Thanks, Miss Rheinberg. I will include you among the number. I want to tell you some astonishing news, which occurred just a few moments before I came up here."

"Do tell," said Mrs. Rheinberg, her husband and daughter simultaneously.

"A rabbi, on his way to New Orleans, came down on the steamer this evening. It seems that Everard, who has friends in St. Louis, knew of his coming and had Rebecca Silverbaum's and Berkhoff's license and everything ready. While the steamer was taking freight the rabbi married the couple in the private parlor of the hotel.

And now they are registered in the book as Mr. and Mrs. Berkhoff."

"Did you ever!" cried Letitia. "What a wonderful man that lawyer is. He ought to be a diplomat."

"Wonderful! I call him a busybody. The folks round town say he has strained every nerve to have the pair married."

"Now, father, what did I tell you? I told you I know Rebecca too well. She would have broken with Berkhoff when he failed if it had not been for Everard. I was round to see Rebecca a few days after Berkhoff's failure. Mrs. Silverbaum told me Rebecca was too ill to see any one, but the way she talked I thought Rebecca was going to break the engagement. Heaven knows they have been engaged long enough," said Letitia.

"That Berkhoff is doing remarkably well since his failure. He has taken in all of poor Feld's trade," sighed Rheinberg.

"You should have done that," retorted his wife.

"Yes, I should have done it, but I have no luck, Clara, no luck," and Rheinberg gazed around spiritlessly.

"Luck!" exclaimed Arnold, "there is an example in Everard. They tell me he is prosperous. Sought after in all the neighboring towns; called 'the great criminal lawyer.'"

"Yes," said Rheinberg cheerfully, "all luck. It was rumored that Berkhoff in some way helped him in the Niles case and that made his fortune."

"But some people can't take anything, even if it be thrown under their feet," returned Mrs. Rheinberg snappishly.

"Ha, ha, Miss Grace," said Arnold as he left the house, "I am now supplied with time and money for the siege, and the fortress must surrender. By heavens, Grace, there shall be no armistice until you capitulate to my terms."

To the poor victim Arnold was as the veiled Mokanna—his heart was filled with perfidy and baseness. She, like Zelica, saw it unveiled in all its monstrous hideousness.

A few days after his evening visit, Arnold, with a smiling mien, boldly rang Mrs. Rheinberg's door-bell. It was hastily opened by Susan, the tidy maid of all work. She ushered him in with the utmost deference. "I should like to see Mrs. Rheinberg. I hope she is in," said Arnold, taking the precaution not to alarm Grace by sending for her, wisely apprehending that her uncle's wishes might not yet have produced the desired effect.

After being told that she was in and after he was seated Susan ran upstairs. "A handsome stranger, Miss Letitia, wishes to see you. Look your prettiest, Miss, he is well worth the trouble. I wish I had your advantages." With a toss of her head, elastic step, and humming a song, she disappeared within the mysterious precincts of the kitchen.

"And I wish I had your cheerful, happy disposition. I never feel perfectly contented; one want supplied, another arises. Ah! Arnold!" said Letitia, glancing at the card. "I must add

a few touches to my attire. People say I have the tact of making the simplest thing look well. Fools!" exclaimed she bitterly, "they don't know I owe this faculty to the scantiness of my purse."

"Delighted to see you, Mr. Arnold," said Letitia, tripping into the parlor with a radiant face.

"The happiness is mutual, I assure you, Miss Rheinberg. There was a fashionable wedding this morning. It is a wonder you were not there."

"I suppose you refer to the wedding of Miss Hill and Charlie Bennett. You know the Hills consider themselves the *crème de crème*," replied Letitia, scornfully. "They dislike Jews; fear contamination."

"Ha, ha," laughed Arnold, "they belong to the old régime. I hear our distinguished lawyer was there. On dit, he is dangling after the superb Amelia."

"Bah! she will twist his heart and throw it after him."

"She won't notice him and treats him with contempt. Serves him right. The idea of leaving the pretty Jewish girls!" said Arnold maliciously.

"There is no fear of Miss Hill accepting Mr. Everard."

"He is trying to be magnificent, generous, too. He bought a house and lot yesterday for two thousand dollars as a present for Berkhoff and his wife. He is having it furnished also. That is *ad captandum vulgus*," sneered Arnold.

"He must be very rich to do that," gasped Letitia.

"Yes, he makes a grand show at all events. Miss Hill, if she would condescend, would not be doing so badly as far as money matters are concerned, but the look of the Jew irritates her."

"He doesn't look like one, that is sure."

"But he is, nevertheless. I am sure his name was Everhard."

"Where are Mr. and Mrs. Bennett stopping?"

"They left for St. Louis. When they come back they are to board at the St. Charles and have a grand reception. Is Miss Grace in?"

"No, she is spending the day at the house of Miss Moss, poor little thing. Entre nous, I think she will soon join her parents."

"Is that possible?" Arnold asked in consternation.

"I really fear death will soon claim her for his bride," and Letitia put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"It is about nine months since her parents died and she should have a protector, some one to look after her tenderly."

"But her year of mourning has not yet expired."

"That is nothing. Girls have been married when their parents were on their death-bed."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Arnold, when they have had the approbation of their parents."

"Do you mean that Mr. and Mrs. Feld would not give their consent if they were alive?" asked Arnold, indignantly.

"By no means. Have patience. Father says you are a capital fellow. He told Grace so, and that you would not run when you smelt smoke."

"I am very grateful to your father. I must be going now. Do not forget to put in a good word for me; it may work wonders."

"Rely upon me," said Letitia smilingly.

"I am an idiot," said Arnold as the door closed upon him. "I have secured the jewels, but I have neglected to procure a few lines from Grace's father commanding her to marry me. If all means fail me, I must sell myself to Mephistopheles and gain my coveted treasure. I fortunately secured Mr. Feld's autograph just before he died. I am an expert penman and all will be well." So he wrote a few lines in his memorandum book, signed the name accurately after the copy, tore the page out of the book, folded it up and put it away carefully for future use.

The blood rushed through Arnold's veins with increased velocity, his pace quickened with the rapidity of his thoughts, and he soon found himself in the suburbs of the town in the vicinity of a small orchard. The trees were thicketed and though stripped of leaves, formed with their branches a rather secure place of concealment, through which one could see and not be seen from the other side.

A mysterious, subtle, undefinable influence suddenly recalled Arnold to himself. He looked up and saw a veiled figure on the other side of the orchard, clad in the deepest black.

"Ah!" he cried, "there is Grace coming home, not from her friends, but from a walk, I suppose. I can see her, but she cannot see me. A believer in God occupying himself with the minute de-

tails of our life would say 'a dispensation of Providence,' but I say, whether from heaven or hell, she shall not pass me by. She is absorbed in thought and observes nothing. I shall turn down this corner and then meet her face to face. The wood is lonely, the orchard my good genius; I can woo her here ten thousand times more advantageously than at the house, where that overweening, audacious, black-eyed houri is at my elbow."

In a few moments Arnold was around the corner and half way up the lane. He stood motionless in the road with outstretched arms. Grace came leisurely, dreamingly on, seeing nothing until she found herself within his embrace. She endeavored to shriek aloud, so that her voice might be heard from one end of the town to the other—to reach heaven! But for a moment her tongue was paralyzed.

"Well, my dear," said Arnold mockingly, as Grace's attempt to cry died away in a gurgling sound, "why do you not speak?"

The veil had fallen from her face, and Arnold was shocked to see the ravages a few months of acute misery had made upon those once youthful features. She looked so ethereal, so like the picture of an angel, with that pearly complexion and aureate hair; her upturned eyes appealed so to the higher sentiments of his nature that he refrained from imprinting on her lips that ardent kiss which he so passionately longed to give.

"How shall I escape from this hated man?" murmured Grace as she sank down white and

trembling on a log, which lay almost at their feet.

"Dearest girl," said he as he seated himself by her side, "brightest star of my firmament, whose gentle face emits such silvery radiance, how I have longed and prayed for this hour to see you once more. Heart's delight, where over this wide, wide earth is there a deeper love in the heart of man for woman than is mine for thee? Nay, sweet one," as he attempted to take her hand which she threw aside with disgust, "do not turn from me, but say you will make me one of the happiest of mortals."

"Villain, monster of evil, worker of iniquity, my evil genius," replied Grace, the floodgate of her tongue being opened, "why do you follow me? I would not marry you before I knew you, now I loathe you. Demon, murderer of my parents, begone."

Arnold, exasperated, jumped up with a furious oath, then remembering himself, quietly sat down and said: "Come, come, my pretty one, give me your hand. Let us forget the past and think only of the present. I love you wildly, madly, and would be happy to die for you. Your hand, my darling."

"Away! touch me not, you dishonorable man. I scorn you. Go, gambler, rob people of their diamonds," and Grace fairly shrieked out the words.

Arnold gave a low, demoniacal laugh, which would have reflected honor on a Richard wooing Lady Anne, and said, "'But 'twas thy beauty provoked me,' I did it all for thee."

"But I am not to be won like England's Anne. No new love will ever bud forth on the ruins of the old. The flowers will cease to grow when I love you. So leave me now and forever," and she said this with such vehemence and energy that she not only startled Arnold, but herself.

"I shall have to play my last card," mentally said Arnold, and then, aloud, "I had hoped, dearest girl, to induce you of your own account to love me, but as I cannot, I am compelled to be the bearer of a command given me by your father previous to his death, and which implores and bids you marry me. And you know the Bible teaches obedience."

"In that duty," rejoined Grace hastily and somewhat hotly, "I have never been remiss. It was instilled in my mind in my childhood. It broke ties, formed new ones and, alas! what else did it not cause me to do? I obeyed my parents faithfully, unto death, and I pray God to forgive me if I did anything wrong. My father could not, would not, command me to marry a man whom I hate. He knew it."

Arnold had not taken his eyes off of Grace during her reply. He gave her time before he answered for the words to burn deeply into her heart and be a premonition of what must be. "The Fifth commandment has heretofore caused you unhappiness, but for all that Scripture shall be verified, as it will be instrumental in rendering you one of the happiest of women. I saw your father, God bless his memory, some hours before he committed that rash and fatal act. He must then have had suicide in contemplation, as he





"Your father's last wish is to be seen in these few lines."

wrote these few lines to you which I have in my pocket, wishing you to wed me, knowing that it would be for your good. He was aware that your union with Lavalley was utterly impossible, for even if he had come back to you in your desolation, which he took good care not to do, you would feel yourself too humiliated to become the wife of a man whom your father robbed and you in a manner assisted."

His tone and words, cold and cutting as an icicle, dropped like a weight upon her heart and made her gasp out: "Do not speak harshly of Lavalley for not coming back. My filial duty wronged him. I feel confused and bewildered. I have lost my faith in man; great God, help me, that I lose not my faith in Thee." She clasped her hands and raised her streaming eyes to heaven.

"Put your faith in me, dear Grace. I shall not deceive you. Your father's last wish is to be seen in these few lines," and Arnold took the paper he himself had written from his pocket-book and held it before her eyes. She turned away her head; her only desire was to flee from him. "I did not wish," resumed Arnold, "to intrude immediately after your parent's death and insist upon the fulfillment of your father's wish. I thought when some time had elapsed and you were composed you would see the hopelessness of waiting for Lavalley, the dreariness, dependence and the horror of associating with Letitia"—he had probed her inmost thoughts—"whose mind cannot appreciate yours and who has no sympathy with anyone. Your aunt, a plain woman,

barely tolerates you ; therefore, come to me, who will make a snug retreat for you, who will understand, value, cherish, love and adore you. As you have heretofore wept, so shall you hereafter smile. You will grow strong under my sheltering affection and look upon the past miserable months as but the prelude to continual happiness. Come to me, I beg you."

"I cannot believe," returned Grace, vehemently, but tremblingly, which weakness Arnold did not fail to perceive, "that my father left a note expressing a wish for me to marry one whom he knew I could not love or honor. As for your love, I despise it."

"Your father's written wish I placed before you once; here it is again, read it. For its authenticity I swear by the faith of our fathers." The oath gave Arnold no little compunction, still he uttered it without apparent hesitation. "You will not, cannot deny his handwriting. Come, do not be stubborn," as she persistently refused to look at it. Moreover, I warn you not to spurn my love. It will prove a blessing to the woman who will reap the fullness of it. The highest compliment a man can pay a woman is to seek her as his wife."

"Where love is mutual, woman is indeed blessed in man's devotion, but not if coerced into the nuptial bonds with a man she detests. To bind two together who have no amity for each other is a sacrilege."

"But Grace——"

"Speak to me no further. I must go home and think well over this. Give me the note."

"No, read it here. You see now, it is genuine. Do you know this signature?"

Grace looked, read and scrutinized it, with the eye of a critic, but there it was, her father's handwriting, not blurred, but clear and distinct, indelibly stamping on her mind the cruel import of his words.

"Reflect well on your father's last wishes and 'your inheritance will be long in the land.' You shall have time until to-morrow to decide. Think of one thing, obedience, and you will not go astray."

Arnold rose as Grace did, allowed her to pass without any more protestations of love, lifted his hat politely, even gayly, and said: "To-morrow, then, at 2 P. M., you must be here and give me a decided answer. This shall be our trysting place."

Grace bowed her head and passed on. Arnold watched her until she was out of sight. Her drooping figure and slow steps smote him somewhat for his persecution and he could not help remarking: "Devilish sorry, but why can't she see what is good for her and thank God who has sent her fate in such a pleasing shape! But, by Jove, this is a coup de maitre." He took a cigar out of his cigar case, lighted it and sauntered homeward, not without some anxiety as to the result of his manœuvre.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Come, Grace, take something to eat, you look miserable. Your visit to-day to Mary Moss has done you no good. Do take something," insisted Mrs. Rheinberg.

"Never mind, aunt, I do not want any dinner."

"No dinner! no wonder you get so thin, child."

"Please, aunt, don't let me be disturbed to-night. I shall not try your patience much longer. I shall soon give up thinking what 'might have been.' I intend doing better."

"Well spoken, dear child. It is time for you to turn over a new leaf. You mustn't let your mind think of one thing so long. Grief must wear away or it will wear us out. The children shall not trouble you."

"Thanks; good-night." Grace would gladly have thrown her arms around Mrs. Rheinberg's neck and wept out the agony of her heart, but there was no call in her eye, no response in her even unsympathetic "good-night."

"My sweet children disturb any one, indeed! She knows not what children are to console one in time of trouble. But how should she know anything about children, never having had any brothers or sisters? Now, if my good Joseph should die, I should not have time to give way

like her. After a few weeks of grief—for I should cry dreadfully, I know”—and the matron wiped away a tear at the thought, “my children’s needs would be so great that I could only snatch a few hours, and after a while would have to stop and try to be satisfied with the will of God.”

When Grace told her aunt about “doing better” she had no idea what she would do. She only felt a dull, aching pain in her head, which put an absolute veto on her thinking. She went to her room and threw herself undressed on the bed. It was long ere balmy sleep fell on her eyelids and steeped her sorrows in momentary oblivion.

Grace, waking up with a start, exclaimed, “how long have I slept? I am very cold and cramped. It is five,” said she, striking a match and looking at the clock. “I must think now what toils I am in. Are they human or not? Did my dear dead father do this? Who knows he might have been driven into it by Arnold, for it is his writing.” Grace was too unsophisticated and unsuspecting to doubt but that her father was the author of the letter.

“How can I,” she cried, “escape from the arms of Arnold, who has so long, like a devil-fish, thrown out his tentacles to draw me in? If I could only rest, but I must not secure it as my father did.” This voice, which made itself heard in the darkness, was the voice of immortality.

“But one thing is left me,” and there stood before Grace the walls of the convent with Sister Louise as the guardian angel. She thought not

of the doctrines of the Catholic Church, the whole religion was embodied in one form, Sister Louise, who so young had voluntarily renounced the pleasures of the world, and whose life was an eternal spring of peace and holy joy. Hers was the path of roses whose stems had no thorns. The event of yesterday came rushing over Grace like a torrent which she could not check. That lethargy which her mind craved for would not come; it had left her with sleep. She was seized with uncontrollable shudderings and walked up and down her small room with rapid strides. Each time as the door or window barred her passage, she looked up as if there was some one there to reprove her. Her mind, from being torpid, became excessively agitated and generated a multitude of wild, fantastic ideas. "Oh, why," she cried, "do not these thoughts take some tangible shape?"

Her imagination now came into play; phantasms floated around her, they increased in size and assumed bold, extravagant shapes; they surged like the wild waves of the storm, one larger and fiercer than the others overleapt them all; everything was swallowed up in one deep, dark, indistinct and undetermined mass. As a roaring like pursuing waters sounded around her, with one bound she was to the door, through the hall, down the stairs, into the street, fleeing as if chased by furies and fiends.

"I am not very well, and shall say my matins in the oratory instead of the chapel this morning," said Sister Louise to Sister Bridget.

"You had better, as it is a little damp out." The chapel was in the nuns' building and Sister Louise slept in the girls' dormitory.

"Holy Mother, Virgin Mary," said Sister Louise as she stopped in the midst of her prayers, the rosary dropping from her hands, as with a heavy thud something fell at her feet. "It is my poor, beloved Grace." A smile of ineffable love and tenderness wreathed her pale lips, as she chafed the cold hands of the unconscious girl. "She will not die," cried the nun. "She will live to be saved and to bless the hour which brought her within these walls. Oh, blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, I beseech Thee to grant this poor creature to survive this shock, be a convert to our holy religion in heart and soul, an humble penitent at Thy feet and a harbinger of Christian love and peace wherever she goes," and with the sign of the cross and "amen," she turned her attention to the insensible girl.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Well, Dr. Harriot," said Sister Louise to the physician, who came to see Grace in the nuns' infirmary where she had been removed, "is there hope?"

"I must feel her pulse and examine the symptoms carefully before I can tell you. Her pulse beats very irregularly and quickly, I observe. Did you notice her open her eyes just now? The pupils are contracted. The indications are of brain fever."

"Doctor, you must do your best," said Sister Louise anxiously.

"I have been the medical practitioner of the college and convent for a number of years, and have taken a deep interest in many that I have tidied over severe and protracted diseases, but in none did I take such an interest as I shall in the case of this poor unfortunate girl."

"Unhappy creature," murmured the nun.

"Why, I have known Grace from childhood and was the family physician of her parents. How I sympathize with her! I think this has been brought on by great mental excitement and will not readily give way."

"She is young."

"Yes, therefore with great care and unremitting attention she may be able to triumph over the malady."

"That care and attention she shall have."

"Here I leave a prescription of aconite; give according to directions. Darken the room partially. About free ventilation and frequent changes of linen, you sisters need never be told, but there is one thing that is absolutely necessary for her, and that is quiet. I order that as one of the principal remedies."

"You can depend upon me. I only hope," was the nun's mental wish, "that you will do your duty as well as I shall do mine," for the physician was addicted to drink, but was still considered by many "the best in town."

"I wonder how she ever came here? Have you sent word to her relatives?" inquired the physician.

"Yes, I expect them here any moment. The gates are generally locked early, so how Grace came in is a mystery to me. I am happy to say she has a liking for me."

"She is wise. I shall call soon again," replied the physician as he left.

"Good-morning," said Dr. Harriot to Mr. and Mrs. Rheinberg, whom he met coming in at the gate, looking anxious and excited.

"How is Grace?"

"My dear old friends, I regret to say she is ill."

"We must take her home immediately," exclaimed Mrs. Rheinberg.

"Impossible, my dear friends."

"She must be taken home, I say," persisted Mrs. Rheinberg. "She must be well taken care of, and I must see to it."

"But it is unreasonable to have her moved now," urged the doctor. "As for attention, I will be responsible for that; she shall have it. The nuns are skillful nurses, you know."

"I know nothing of the kind," retorted Mrs. Rheinberg.

"Well, maybe your husband knows something about it, then," coolly returned the physician.

"Clara," spoke Mr. Rheinberg, "we will have to be satisfied with the doctor's advice. Just as soon as she is able we will take her home."

"I am going in to see her, anyway," said Mrs. Rheinberg, angrily. "Come on, Joseph, you can stay in the parlor."

"See her by all means," said the doctor, as he passed out of the gate.

"Come," said a nun to Mrs. Rheinberg, who had demanded admittance, "you are to see your niece. Your husband can remain in the parlor."

As the door opened, Grace, whose eyes were momentarily growing more sensitive to the light, closed them and lay for a few moments perfectly still.

"Is she asleep?" whispered Mrs. Rheinberg, quietly seating herself.

"I scarcely think so," returned Sister Louise.

Mrs. Rheinberg arose, went up to the bed and put her cool hands on the burning forehead of Grace. She opened her feverish eyes and gazed at her aunt fixedly, but vacantly.

"Dear Grace," said Mrs. Rheinberg, endeavoring to smooth her hair with one hand, and caressingly stroking her brow with the other, "you will come and be nursed at home, won't you?"

Grace writhed under her aunt's touch, but the words "come home" threw her into a frenzy. "Home! I have no home. Sister Louise," and her voice rose to a pitch of shrieking entreaty, "do not send me home. Keep me with you. I will not be Arnold's wife. Take him away. I will not see him." She struggled and raved and finally threw the bed-clothes over her face to shut out the hated vision.

"What shall I do?" asked Mrs. Rheinberg helplessly.

"Leave now," said Sister Louise decidedly. "You see she is delirious and why aggravate her excitement?"

"But she wants care."

"And I say she shall have it. Have no fear on that account. I assure you, dear Mrs. Rheinberg, you can entrust her to my care."

"Well, Clara, how is she?" asked Mr. Rheinberg as his wife entered the parlor.

"Come, we have to leave her now, she is out of her mind."

"As soon as she is better we will take the poor thing home."

"Indeed, not long shall Grace stay in this place and listen to the honeyed words of that nun," and to give emphasis to her words Mrs. Rheinberg closed the gate with a slam.

Notwithstanding care and precaution the fever rapidly increased. Day after day Grace muttered and raved in delirium or lay in a semi-comatose state.

"Dr. Harriot," said Sister Louise to the physician one day, "whenever the aunt or cousin of

Graces comes in she instantly prays to be saved from them. After such paroxysms her exhaustion and prostration are always greater and her stupor deeper."

"They must be kept away then," promptly returned the physician. "Tell them I have strictly prohibited their admittance to the sick room for the present. Tell me, does she recognize you?"

"Not exactly, but my hand and voice seem to soothe and control her."

"A kind of mesmerism in your touch. Well, she had byronia yesterday; she shall have belladonna to-day and stramonium to-morrow. Does she still crave for ice?"

"Incessantly."

"Let her have all she wants of it."

Upon Sister Louise devolved the principal part of the tedious and arduous nursing. Stimulated by the prospect of saving not only the life of a being dear to her, but a soul as well, the task, though painful, was a most grateful one.

Days had run to weeks; four long, dreary weeks had come and gone. Meanwhile the days had lengthened as the sun moved continually in a higher circle; the March snows had been melted by the soft rains of April, and the motley drama of human life, with its shifting scenes of joy and sorrow, birth and decay—the perfect transcript of the eternal nature molding and controlling all—enacted itself as from the beginning, while Grace still tossed in her bed of sickness and pain.

"Sister Louise," said Dr. Harriot, "the crisis is near at hand. See what a profound stupor she is in."

"She was very violent before you came, consequently the exhaustion is excessive. I gave her, or rather attempted to give her, some of that drink made of milk, eggs well beaten, and a small quantity of brandy."

"The beatings of her pulse are so feeble as to be scarcely felt, her skin is clothed in a cold, clammy perspiration and has lost its elasticity."

"See her face, Doctor, how pinched and pallid it is."

"It seems as if that mysterious, volatile essence which we call life has fled, but Grace is only in a coma."

"Will she recover?"

"God must decide that, Sister Louise," answered the physician solemnly. "I shall call frequently during the day to see if there be a change."

"If she should die in this unshrived, impenitent state, will the Lord Jesus Christ receive the soul for whose redemption I have so earnestly prayed?" was now the anxious thought of Sister Louise.

"Girls," said Sister Benedicta, moving in her usual noiseless manner among the pupils in the yard, "Grace Feld, whom many of you know personally, is lying very low. In her chamber are two angels contending for victory. I know I need not tell you that you must not trespass on the grounds surrounding the building where she is, which, though forbidden, you do sometimes when playing."

"No, no," they responded in a subdued chorus,

with tears in their eyes, "we shall tread more quietly; we shall not speak above our breath, and we shall pray God to make the poor sick girl well."

"Good," replied the nun softly, "I have no more to say."

"Sister Mary Ann," said one of the girls, who had assembled in the school-room, "it is awful to think that while we are talking or reciting, eating or drinking, Grace Feld may die."

"To be sure it is," replied the aged nun. "And, girls, no one knows who may be called next."

"Are you afraid to die, Sister Mary Ann?" asked Victoria Comin, a tall girl from Baton Rouge.

"Yes," said she tremblingly, "I want to live."

"But you will go to heaven, you are so good," added Victoria.

"I hope so, my child."

"But if the girl of the other faith"—there were no harsh names to-day—"should die so young, so good, would she be irrevocably lost or would she remain in purgatory with unbaptized infants?" questioned Victoria.

"You know that anyone who has not been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost can never rest in the bosom of the Saviour, and I fear she cannot enter even purgatory," and the good, old sister knitted faster than ever.

"How dismal," groaned Victoria. "I thank God I am a Catholic."

"But," said Ann Miller, whom nobody observed, springing up excitedly, "Christ is too

good. There must be some nice place for the pure of heart."

"I tell you," said several of the girls in chorus, "there is——"

"Girls," spoke Sister Mary Ann, "I want you all to be quiet. Do your best while here, attend to your religious duties, and when you die and go to heaven you will see who is there. Children know not what is to happen in the next world; they must follow the teachings of the Church while here. Ann, you have been crying."

"I want to go to the other building where Grace Feld is," sobbed the girl.

"But you can do no good there. You will only be in the way."

"I will not be in the way. I will be on the floor at the foot of the bed or under it. Pray, good Sister Mary Ann, get me excused for this day."

"Sister Louise will not let you in."

"Please give me the excuse. Sister Louise will not deny me. Just give me the excuse," repeated Ann.

"Well, I cannot refuse you. You shall be excused. You see if it will do you any good."

"Thanks, kind Sister," answered Ann, kissing her hand.

"Well, whispered Sister Benedicta, coming into the sick room, "it is noon and you must have some refreshment. How is she?"

"No perceptible change," returned Sister Louise.

"Has the doctor been here?"

"Yes, already twice to-day. Oh, Sister Benedicta, it is bitter to think she may die and descend into the realms of darkness," said Sister Louise shudderingly.

"Do you know, I think, as she came to the convent she wanted to be a Catholic, and probably we have done wrong by not attending to her unexpressed wish," added Sister Benedicta, looking steadily at Sister Louise.

"No, no," replied the young nun. "As much as I should like to see Grace a Catholic, I should not wish her to become one through her weakness. I wish her to be converted through the beauties and convictions of our religion, so that she will gladly stand with us at the Communion table and partake of the Holy Sacrament."

"You may be right," murmured Sister Benedicta. "I shall take your place now. Go and consider yourself relieved for a few hours."

"I cannot leave now. I must stay with this precious one to see if her soul take its flight to its eternal home or with God's will she open her eyes in recognition of terrestrial surroundings."

"Have your way."

"Sister Benedicta sent me in with this," said Ann Miller, walking in a few moments afterward with a tray of eatables.

"Dear child, I need nothing. The excitement of dread and suspense are sufficient to sustain me, but I shall take something, as Sister Benedicta is so kind."

"Sister Louise, may I stay with you?" said Ann, quietly.

"My dear, you are better off at your lessons.

Anyway, you will be crying here, your eyes are red already."

"Yes, so they are, but I will not cry if you will let me stay with you; I will only pray to myself. I don't talk of your goodness, Sister Louise, because I should die without you," said the child passionately, but in a low voice: "Grace Feld has been very kind, very good to me. Let me stay just until she wakes up, please God."

"Yes, she will awake either in life or death as the latter is the passage to another life. Ann, I cannot resist your pleadings. If you have received permission you may stay. Take the tray away and come back."

"Sister Mary Ann took pity on me and gave me an excuse. I shall be back directly," and Ann noiselessly left the room.

"Is there still no change?" asked Sister Benedicta, coming in at ten in the evening.

"To my grief there is none yet," replied Sister Louise sadly.

"I have come to share the vigils of the night with you. You can rest now."

"I want you to stay, but I want you to sit in that comfortable arm-chair and sleep, too. I shall remain by the bed."

"Very well, if you want me, call me. I should persuade you to rest, but I know it would not do much good now. May the holy saints protect you," said Sister Benedicta, seating herself in the easy chair, in which she soon fell asleep.

The clock struck twelve, the mystical, ghostly hour; then one, two, three, four. Sister Louise touched the hands of Grace and put them to her

forehead. She ran and tapped Sister Benedicta lightly.

"What is the matter?" asked the latter as she rubbed her eyes.

"Joy unutterable! Grace is getting better. The cold, clammy sweat and the tensivity of the skin are gone. Come, let us rub her vigorously."

"Just look at Ann there, bright as a dollar, with the tears glistening in her eyes."

"The child has not closed her eyes this night," rejoined Sister Louise, going industriously to work. In a whirl of gratitude she breathed prayer after prayer that the mind of Grace might be left intact.

"She is becoming warm," said Sister Benedicta.

"Yes, there is a slight moisture about her hands and face, her pulse beats more regularly and her breathing is becoming more perceptible. Did you hear that faint, fluttering sigh as if the soul had reluctantly returned after a flight to a better world?"

"She is coming to herself now," responded Sister Benedicta.

In a few moments Grace opened her eyes and feebly articulated, "You here, Sister Louise! Why do I feel so weak and tired?" and she wearily closed her eyes.

The good nun suppressed her ejaculation of pleasure, and gave her a cordial which had been left prepared and which she swallowed without a murmur.

"Dear Grace, you have been very ill and your own good Dr. Harriot is attending you. He left orders for you to keep perfectly quiet. You are

to mind only your nurses, our humble selves, Sister Benedicta and I. Ask no explanations, when you are well we shall give them to you. Now do not think, but go to sleep," and as Sister Louise spoke she kissed her lightly on the cheek. A slight smile passed over the wan face of the sick girl and, like a fatigued child, she did as she was bidden and fell into a refreshing slumber. When her breathing denoted that she was soundly sleeping, then the gentle Sister threw herself on her knees, made the sign of the cross, raised her streaming eyes to heaven and, slipping the rosary through her fingers, said; "Almighty and eternal God, Thou who reignest on high and canst do all things, who has stretched forth Thy hand and saved this soul from mortal death, I beseech Thee in Thy infinite mercy and wisdom to let this good spirit know and hearken unto Thy voice, that she may rejoice in Thy goodness, learn of the light Eternal and be saved through Thee, who by Thy death and passion gavest hope to all mankind."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Alice," said Mr. Hill to his daughter, who had just arrived from St. Louis and was at the hotel, "I am delighted to see you, but I had hoped you would live with us."

"You dear papa, Charlie says it will be much pleasanter this way. We shall have to visit one another, invite one another to luncheon, dinner, etc. I wanted to go housekeeping, too, but he will not hear of it."

"What a tyrant," said Amelia.

"Don't you say a word about Charlie. He is the dearest, best, most devoted husband in the world," rejoined the young bride, with tears of happiness in her eyes.

"That he is, my darling; if I had not thought he would be so he never would have had my consent to carry off my sprightly, sunny Alice," returned her father, fondly stroking her hair.

"Yes, Alice," added Amelia, "I believe Charlie is worthy of you."

"My Amelia," said her father proudly, "will stay with me, for there is no congenial spirit for her. My physician has ordered me to travel, but I am afraid some one will see, value and want to steal my great pearl. Ah! that would be sad."

"Do not fear, father," rejoined Amelia, turning very pale. "I shall never marry."

"Father," said Bennett, rushing in, "I am advanced to cashier in the bank. Some one who knows told me as I was overlooking my baggage. I know also to whom I am indebted. I thank you, father, in the name of myself and my dear little wife. Doesn't she look charming?"

"Indeed, Charlie, you must be the happiest person in the world," returned Mr. Hill.

"Well," said Bennett, laughing, "I am ready to shoot anyone who says I am not."

"Before you went to look for your baggage, and then I only saw you a moment, I knew you were the same good, gay Charlie," added Amelia.

"I suppose you know that by the kiss I gave you. Well, never mind, I am going to be good sure enough now. Marriage improves a man, above all when he happens to get a wife like mine."

"No more flattery," said Alice.

"Come, father, let us go to the bank."

"Certainly, take care of yourselves, dears, till we return."

"Amelia, don't let any man run off with this woman while I am gone," continued Charlie, kissing Alice repeatedly; "say she is Bennett's property."

"Don't alarm yourself, Charlie, nobody will want me. Bye-bye."

"Charlie is a noble fellow," said Amelia.

"Indeed, he is. Notwithstanding his gay spirits he thinks seriously of the happiness of others. He spoke of you continually while we were away."

"What did he say?"

"He regretted that 'our superb Amelia' was confined to this small town."

"Why? Do I need large fields to develop my splendid talents?" said Amelia, ironically.

"No, but in large cities many great and distinguished men congregate and there your goodness and your beauty would be appreciated," returned Alice warmly.

"You and Charlie are too considerate," said Amelia coldly. "Father's resources are ample, and if I were inclined to travel and remain months in some large cities, I should have only to say so."

"Papa is not looking much better. Is he entirely recovered?" anxiously inquired Alice.

"I'm afraid father will never be the man he was before the first stroke of paralysis. He seems well, but has lost his ambition. He refuses client after client, but insists upon going regularly to his office. I am urging him to retire and you and Charlie must do the same."

"Well, why not travel? Diversity is just what papa requires."

"I do not care to go traveling; still, for father's sake, I would go."

"There was a time when you were fond of traveling. You formerly wished that papa would give himself a little respite in that direction."

"Yes, yes, I do want to go, I am eager to go," said Amelia, turning pale.

"Sister, you are an enigma to-day. You say you do not want to marry, you do not want to travel, then almost in the same breath you do

want to travel. What is the matter with you, who are always so calm, so even, so candid?" said Alice, gazing at Amelia wonderingly.

"Why question me? Why torment me?"

"Heaven forbid that I should pain you," returned Alice caressingly.

"But you do. You *are* torturing me."

"I? Oh, Amelia, you look pale, worn, sick. Have you had the ague since I have been gone?"

"You are silly. I am not ill. Do you think that everyone, not overflowing with happiness like you, must be ill?"

"Have I lost through marriage my kind, sweet, gentle sister?" asked Alice, bursting into tears.

"Dear, dear, do not cry. Are you blind? Can you not see that I am unwell?"

"Dear sister," returned Alice, throwing her arms around Amelia's neck, "you are not acting with your accustomed consistency. Come, lie down on the sofa and rest."

"I cannot rest."

"Tell me then, are you unhappy?"

A low moan escaped Amelia's lips.

"I am answered. Confide in me, your little Alice, who always breathed her troubles on your dear bosom. It cannot be that you nurse some unrequited love."

"Ah!" said Amelia mournfully, "it is more hopeless than that."

"I do not understand you. What can be worse than unrequited love? I shudder to think what would have become of me if Charlie had not loved me."

"But to love and be loved," said Amelia excitedly.

"That is lovely. Then go and get married."

"But if judgment, self-esteem and honor tell you to crush that love, what then?" returned Amelia, in anguish of mind.

"Amelia Hill can never love dishonorably," said Alice promptly and proudly.

"And never will. I shall tear it from my heart. But oh, the pain," groaned Amelia.

"I am perfectly astonished at you. Your character has phases like the moon. For heaven's sake tell me the name of this man, who does aspire to your hand and who, though you are aware he is unworthy of you, is capable of making such a deep impression upon your heart. His name, sister, I beg of you."

"Alice, I am ashamed," murmured Amelia, covering her burning face with her handkerchief.

"To little Alice! I assure you whatever you will tell me shall never be divulged without your consent. Come, tell me, we have no mother and must confide in each other. You will be all the happier, too. Come, do," pleaded she.

"Mark Anthony Everard, the *Jew*, proposed to me," said Amelia emphatically.

"And——"

"And," interrupted Amelia, "I treated him and his proposal with the scorn they deserve."

"Yet you love him," said Alice, pale with agitation.

"I love him wildly, but still recoil from him."

"Unhappy Amelia. Does papa know of this?"

"Know? He does not dream of it and must

not know. He would blush with shame to think that his daughter, Amelia Hill, should be in love with a Jew," and she laughed hysterically.

"How horrid that that one little word, Jew, should be a barrier between you and him!"

"But it is an impassable one."

"Yet it has been crossed," said Alice nervously.

"Yes, but unless either the man or the woman is converted, or both are indifferent to religion, it results in unhappiness."

"But what will you do?"

"Have I not told you," returned she contemptuously, "how I treated him."

"What did he say?"

"What men always say, I suppose. That I was destined for him and that I would yet learn to love him."

"What audacity! Perfectly shocking."

"But I shall live to defy him. I *will* stamp this passion out. It must die if, like Samson, I go down with it."

"Amelia, your precious life must not be sacrificed."

"What can be done under these circumstances?"

"Love him a little."

"Love him a little!" replied Amelia, amazedly. "And then?"

"Love him a little more."

"And then what?"

"Marry him," said Alice smiling, though very white.

"You are jesting, sister."

"There is some one rapping. A card, Mr. Everard wishes to see me," said Alice as she took the card from the bell-boy. "What shall I do?"

"Admit him; I shall retire."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Have any of you seen Grace to-day?" said Arnold as he, Mr. and Mrs. Rheinberg and Letitia were assembled in the parlor.

"Yes, she is doing nicely, too; able to sit up in bed. You must remember that it is three weeks since she changed for the better," answered Mrs. Rheinberg.

"Thank God," said her husband, "she will soon come home."

"The way she feels now I think she will be a long time about it. I never saw such a girl. She actually hates me since she has been sick," said Mrs. Rheinberg.

"You are mistaken, it is only the peevishness of sickness."

"No, I am not, Joseph. When she was delirious it was different, but now when Letitia or I come in she still draws her brows up, is sullen, never saying a word, and half the time closing her eyes. I tell you I am tired of running after her and begging her to come home and getting the same answer every day, 'wait until I am better.' Now, if you want her to come home, run after her yourself."

"Clara, you know I have inquired after her several times."

"Hundreds of times you mean, father," interrupted Letitia.

"Well, it is not pleasant for a man to go there," said Mr. Rheinberg. "It is your place, Clara."

"Let her stay there until her ideas are different. Let her stay until those dreary walls seem like a prison. She will be glad enough to come here yet, silly thing," added Mrs. Rheinberg.

"That will never do," remonstrated Arnold. "You have no idea how the nuns will influence and control her. They will be good to her, gentle and soft as a summer's zephyr. And what does Grace want? Nothing but to blot out the past. She will not trouble herself about the whys or wherefores, about considerations, motives or calculations."

"She knows no gratitude. What shall I do, wear my shoes out running to the convent?" angrily said Mrs. Rheinberg.

"The nuns wish to acquire a lost soul. Everything that can induce a half slumbering mind to dwell peacefully, lovingly and yearningly upon religion will be done," persisted Arnold.

"Why don't you go yourself?" said Letitia.

"Probably I have been!"

"No!" cried Letitia. "Do tell us all about it."

"Well, I had the courage——"

"The boldness," exclaimed Letitia.

"The courage," pursued Arnold, without noticing Letitia's remark, "to go to the convent and endeavor to represent myself as 'one who has a right to know.' It seems they were prepared for me. The portress told me Sister Louise, whoever that may be, said that Miss Feld would not receive visitors until she had entirely recovered.

Ha, ha! Rheinberg, I have no doubt they will send in a nice little bill."

"That girl will ruin us, that's just what she'll do; I know her," said Mrs. Rheinberg.

"Clara, why will you talk this way? I will manage to pay it," responded her husband.

"Don't be alarmed, mother," said Letitia, "the nuns will never send in an account."

"And if they do," continued Arnold, "I, who hope to be considered her future husband, am eager to pay all demands. But, Rheinberg, listen to my appeal. Take the girl from the convent. Do not let her remain there."

"You are right. She ought to come home. She shall not stay there another day," declared Mr. Rheinberg.

"Bah!" are you afraid of Grace turning Catholic?" exclaimed Letitia scornfully. "I assure you she does not possess enough courage; she would think if she changed her religion her doom was sealed. And she will never do anything that causes comment. She has no firmness of character, but in regard to her religion she is adamant."

"Letitia is right," added Mrs. Rheinberg, seconding the unexpressed wish of her daughter, that Grace remain in the convent for the present. "Grace is too timid to turn. I suppose she wants to stay because the children are too noisy here. Everything frets her, so perhaps she had better stay where she is until she is well and strong, and then she will come without any begging. Yet, if you wish it, Joseph, I will go after her again to-morrow."

"Yes, by all means."

It is needless to say that though Mrs. Rheinberg went the next day to the convent and in her own way urged Grace to come home, the next night found the latter in the same place. There she remained, contrary to the heartfelt desire and expressed wish of her uncle. And Mr. Arnold could do nothing but fret and fume, curse his fate and say he was "born under an unlucky star."

Around the walls of the room in which Grace was, were placed pictures representing various saints in different scenes of beatitude. St. Jerome in the wilderness, the Bible in his hand, with mild and pensive face; St. Anthony, with the "sacred fire" painted by his side, and Francis D'Assissi were the notable ones, but the most conspicuous of all was the Virgin Mother, with her beseeching eyes raised heavenward, and the smiling infant in happy innocence and loveliness. That picture was directly over the mantel.

"You love to look at that picture, do you not?" said Sister Louise to Grace.

"Yes, my eyes are always wandering to it. It seems as if she were my mother and I the little child," answered she, while her eyes involuntarily filled with tears and a soft, holy, ineffable smile overcast her face.

"The Holy Mother is watching over you."

"Blessed Mother," replied Grace with a smile. "But that," pointing to the picture on the right side of the mantel, with a frown, "I do not like."

"What, Christ on the cross?"

"Yes. That picture is frightful, with its torn

and bleeding brows. It is holding up to eternal execration the race from which he was descended and condemning them for an execution which they did not commit. It was the Roman mode of carrying out capital punishment."

"But he said, 'Forgive them.' 'Errare humanum est, condonare divinum.'"

"But over eighteen hundred years have rolled away, generation after generation has passed into oblivion, and the deed is still unforgiven. You cannot dislike me on that account, can you?"

"Grace, Grace, I love you. Do you not know Christianity advocates forgiveness."

"But does it practice it?"

"I hope so. Forgiveness is one of the sweetest and most fragrant flowers that can be culled in the garden of religion," said Sister Louise, kissing her.

"I want nothing, all doubts vanish when you are with me. What a pretty canary bird!"

"Mrs. Stevens, a friend of the institution, sent it to you. Is it not pretty? And how it sings and chirps, captive as it is."

"Sweet bird! how happy thou art," murmured Grace.

"And you, dearest, can be just as happy. Here you will be as the birds, with nothing to do but to sing sweet carols to God."

"I cannot shake off the melancholy," replied Grace, as a tear fell down her cheek, "which creeps over me like a funeral dirge."

"Come, come, you dear one, no tears to-day, for you are to sit up in the arm-chair. You would stay in bed forever, I do believe, if someone did

not make you get up. You lazy girl," and Sister Louise patted her on the face. "Here you have been convalescent for several weeks and not out of bed yet. Fie! See, here is a nice black wrapper."

"I suppose my aunt did not send my wearing apparel?"

"No, she only sent some underwear. It is just as well, dear," said the good sister, sponging her face and hands.

The hair of Grace, which had been cut short, surrounded her head like a golden crown. It required all the persuasion, nay, force of the brush to make it smooth, and then here and there one little curl more rebellious than its fellows, would boldly thrust itself forward as if to say: "The hair is all that rebels, and that will do so to the end."

"Put on these slippers, dear, and throw this shawl over your shoulders."

"Your loving hands crocheted this shawl during the hours of my convalescence, did they not?"

"Yes, dear," and the nun guided her weak and faltering steps to the arm-chair and wheeled it to the window, where she sat and looked out at the beautiful flowers, fanned by the sweet breath of May and scattering abroad their perfume. When in her delirium she ran to the convent the trees had no leaves and the plants neither buds nor leaves. Life and beauty had since sprung out of the dry and torpid stems and branches, speaking volumes of the greatness and goodness of God. A deep, holy calm surrounded the place. The bird in its cage sang pæons of love, and

gratitude to its Creator. Grace drank in all the quietness and ease of the place, and the dream of the flower life entered her mind, "They toil not, neither do they spin."

A few mornings after this Grace was again sitting by the window, inhaling the fragrance of a bouquet of violets, which Sister Louise had given her a few moments before she left the room. These flowers, emblematical of purity, sweetness and modesty, told her of quiet happiness which she wished would only last forever.

"Your cousin, Letitia, and Mary Moss wish to see you," said Sister Louise, entering the room.

"I will neither see that magpie Mary nor that basilisk Letitia," and Grace spoke with all the imperiousness which the indulgent willfulness of sickness produces.

"Well, dear, I hope you will see them. They will be so disappointed if you do not, for I told them you were up."

"No matter, I will not see them. They have disturbed me out of such a happy reverie."

"Dear child," and the nun's mild, gray eye beamed with heavenly satisfaction, "receive them for me."

"I hate them; I love you," petulantly responded Grace.

"For my sake," added Sister Louise, with a look of entreaty.

"Admit them, then."

"My dear cousin, how bad you are looking," said Letitia on entering the room. "Come, you must hurry home. It is no wonder you look so; penned up in these walls. Come home with me,

some one is anxiously awaiting you." The latter words were given with decided emphasis and a significant smile.

"I am contented here," answered Grace with a frown.

"Indeed," exclaimed Mary Moss, "I think you are looking splendid, considering the time you have been sick. It speaks well for your kind nurse."

"Words cannot express what I feel for my friend, Sister Louise," said Grace tenderly.

"But how can you stay here so long?" questioned Letitia.

"I like it here. This tranquility soothes me."

"But the world, the beautiful world," sighed Letitia. "But to enjoy it one must have money."

"Letitia, if you had wealth and power, what would you be?"

"No doubt," sarcastically responded Letitia, "you imagine I should like to be another Cleopatra, floating in a barge decorated with purple and gold, dissolving pearls at banquets with a Mark Anthony at my feet, whilst kingdoms were lost!"

"It makes no difference what I think," said Grace excitedly. "Here are no Cæsars, no kings, no nobles, no princely merchants, no Demosthenes and no Cicero."

"So, my dear cousin Grace, as they are not here, as you say, we must be content 'to make a virtue of necessity,'" replied Letitia mockingly. "It is dull in town, but how incomparably brighter, gayer and happier than within these walls. I shudder to think of living behind these iron grat-

ings, bolts and bars. It is a living tomb. Dear me, Sister Louise, you will have to excuse me, I forgot you were here."

"Do not mind me."

"Come, Grace, come home to the *one*, to all of us who wait for you," said Letitia.

"Cousin," rejoined Grace in her tremulous voice, "talk not to me of the world with its hollow forms and conventionalities, its deceits, mockeries and sin. Here and here only is the haven of rest." She had involuntarily risen, but had sunk back with the last words into the depths of the arm-chair, with dilated eyes, parted lips and panting breath.

"This excitement is too much for her," added Sister Louise. "She is exhausted now and I must put her to bed."

"We shall leave," suggested Mary Moss.

"Certainly," responded Letitia. "But I cannot see why our talk does not do her good. We shall come again; good-bye, Coz."

"Thank heaven they are gone, especially that Letitia," muttered the nun.

"You have placed me in my favorite position again. I can look at the mother and child."

"Imitate the love and goodness that picture represents," gently returned Sister Louise.

"It brings seraphic visions, and do you know whom I see?"

"No, dear, I do not."

"My mother in heaven, looking down and blessing her child! Oh, mother, mother, come." exclaimed Grace with upturned eyes.

The nun crossed herself and said a prayer. She did not dare disturb this ecstasy with a word.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Do you know, Mr. Arnold, what Letitia tells me?" said Mr. Rheinberg to that gentleman as he entered the parlor to spend the evening with the family.

"No, how should I? Does it concern Grace?" asked Arnold in alarm.

"Letitia, tell him," said Mr. Rheinberg.

"Why, father, as you commenced you might have finished. Still, I shall be accommodating. I know," continued Letitia with a smile, "that you are eager for Mr. Arnold to know what it is, so I shall come to the point at once. To observe no religion, to think of heaven as 'such stuff as dreams are made of,' to consider ceremonies or forms as mere blanks——"

"The point, the point," interrupted Arnold.

"Well, I was coming to that. Those things I said appear to me conscientious and right."

"Who cares, but to the point," growled Arnold.

"Well," replied Letitia undauntedly, "I consider myself a faithful Jewess."

"But Grace," cried Arnold, fuming with rage.

"Well, I do not want her to become a Catholic," said Letitia laughing.

"Gracious heaven," exclaimed Arnold, pale with anguish, "I have been here almost daily since

the illness of Grace, and begged of you all to bring her home. What I apprehended will come true."

"She shall be removed to-morrow," said Mr. Rheinberg excitedly.

"Remember, you said that once before, and what was the result?" asked Arnold.

"You must go, dear Joseph, to that headstrong girl. I can do nothing with her. You should have gone before, and as you are her uncle, have forced her to come home," said Mrs. Rheinberg. As she experienced the twinges of conscience, she was anxious to divert reproaches from being cast on herself and imagined she could do no better than attribute the blame to her husband.

"My dear sister Ruth in heaven, forgive me for my neglect," groaned Mr. Rheinberg. "Why did I leave her under the influence of that soft and loving nun. Grace, Grace, this must not be."

"Don't worry yourself, Joseph," resumed his wife, affected by his misery, "you cannot do much with that stubborn, ill-natured girl. Such queer ideas! Don't like my children. What can you expect of her?"

"You need neither fear nor grieve, father. This is 'a tempest in a teapot.' They will not make her a Catholic to-night nor to-morrow. They will never rush things in that manner."

"Do not delay one hour, one minute," interrupted Arnold, to whom the very ticking of the clock announced so many precious moments lost.

"It is night and cannot be thought of," added

Mrs. Rheinberg, "but, Joseph, go early in the morning and force the girl home."

"No, no," replied the more cautious husband, "I will on my knees beg her to come home."

"I say that Grace can be converted to any religion. Any one who makes the effort can change her opinions," continued Arnold. "She never had any religious instruction; you are all descended from the ultramontane Jews, who regarded the slightest deviation from the Talmudical laws a heterodoxy. Now you have thrown off so many restrictions which our faith entailed that you have forgotten what they are."

"Ceremonies are nothing," returned Mr. Rheinberg.

"But they are the shell to the nut and preserve the kernel within. The blossoms on an apple tree should attract not only for their beauty and fragrance, but for what they will produce. They contain the seed of the fruit. While we dispense with ceremonies we must not forget those good moral truths which stand the test of reason and time. In transplanting plants much of the soil is taken with them, so in religion, in rejecting what is deemed non-essential we may discard something extremely requisite."

"But Grace should know that she is born of the house of Israel and remember the teachings of her religion," said Mr. Rheinberg.

"Adhere to what she has not been taught! What does she know of its beauties or deformities? She may have heard that many ceremonies have been lopped off and forms changed, but

whether good or bad substitutions have been made she does not know," added Arnold.

"Never mind, Mr. Arnold," said Letitia, "we believe in God and have the essence of religion. Why dive down into metaphysical abstractions? I thank God, as Gibbons did, that I am 'not a savage or a peasant.'"

"What a happy disposition you possess, Miss Letitia. We are not all equally fortunate. Mr. Rheinberg, you will not forget," resumed Arnold, rising to go.

"Rest easy. I shall do my duty."

"What a whirlwind I have created," mentally exclaimed Letitia. "Why must conscience prick me? If my cousin changes her faith, what is it to me? If she should, it would free me of her presence forever. Fool, when shall I learn wisdom? I am turning sympathetic and sentimental. Bah! I detest that. My road was clear and with my own hands, tongue I should say, have I blocked it."

"Grace," said Sister Louise, "some one in the parlor wishes to see you."

"Is it that hateful Letitia? She was here yesterday. Must she come at ten o'clock in the morning?" answered Grace peevishly.

"It is not your cousin, but your uncle."

"My uncle?" exclaimed Grace, fluttering with pleasurable anticipation. "I must go to him."

"Yes, dear, you must come into the parlor. I shall go with you. Take my arm."

"How you tremble. Are you unwell?"

"No, come on," and the sister accompanied her to the parlor.

Grace, before she was fully aware where she was, found herself in the embrace of her uncle. His tears mingled with hers trickled down her cheeks.

"How long since I have seen you, Grace!" and Mr. Rheinberg showered kisses upon her.

"You have not seen me since my illness, uncle."

"No, but I have been here very often to inquire for you. Dear child, you look——"

"Miserable, you would say. I have suffered much," answered Grace, weeping.

"The long confinement within doors has helped to make you look so poorly. Dear child," continued her uncle, as he gently seated her. "You have been away from us long enough; in fact, too long. I hope you are ready to come home with me to-day. We are all longing for you. The little ones said to me, 'Be sure and bring our cousin Gracie home.'" His voice was touching in its love and pathos.

Sister Louise, who with delicate thoughtfulness, had stood in the embrasure of the window, now came forward and hastily said, "Dear Grace, I shall be back in a short time," kissed her, and in the act remarked in a low tone, "Desert not your best friend," and glided from the room.

"Didn't she say something to you?" questioned Mr. Rheinberg, but without waiting for an answer continued, "I do not like these soft, quiet moving women. They are not all what they seem."

"Forbear, uncle. You know them not when you speak so. They are the most self-sacrificing women in the world. I would I could be like them," and Grace looked distrustfully at her uncle, for in her mental condition likes or dislikes are very easily formed. By attacking, Mr. Rheinberg had lost ground and he was vexed at his indiscretion.

"I know Sister Louise is an exception. Come, come, child, I wish you would come out under the blue heaven and let the sun shine on you in love and pleasure."

Grace heard the word "love" and conjectured Arnold was waiting to waylay and dog her footsteps. "Why, uncle, I have the sunniest room in the world. It is a flood of sunshine. I have a canary bird, too, which sings more sweetly than any prima donna. I have flowers and such good books. I am reading Saint Bruno on "The Delights of Solitude." I have rest, too, and what more can poor Grace want?" said she plaintively. "As for love, I have buried it. I will have none of it. It has been to me like the apples of the Dead Sea, beautiful to the eye, but ashes to the heart. Uncle, the sight of your dear face does me good. Come often. You are the only one of the outside world I care to see. I am content here."

"Dearest girl, do not say so. Get your hat and cloak and let us take a walk. Everything in God's creation calls us out."

"I am not able to walk yet. When I am stronger, Sister Louise will take me around these lovely recreation grounds and through the grape

vine arbors. Do not be afraid, good man, nothing is left undone which can promote my rapid convalescence. My own dear mother could not do more for me. You see, though I am growing physically strong rapidly, my head cannot do much thinking, and I want to be quiet until it does. I shall attempt walking in the garden very soon."

"Dear niece, get ready. I was afraid you would not be strong enough to walk, so I came in a cab for you. Go tell the good Mother to bring in her bill and I will pay it in coin. No sum can be too much as long as you are well, and I can have you once more with my family. You shall have all the rest you want. No one, upon my word of honor, shall trouble you."

"Dear uncle, I am not ready to go yet. I must get strong first, and here is the only place where I can get well."

"Come, child, you would not stay here and have it said that you were neglected by your mother's brother. Come, Grace, time is precious. Your aunt and cousin await you. They *shall* treat you well."

"I dislike Letitia. I shall stay here, where commands are not required that I shall be well treated, but where all is gentleness and love—emanations of the holy spirit. No, I shall not go," and Grace spoke with a firmness which her uncle had not been accustomed to hear from her. "I shall not go," she resumed impetuously, before he had time to recover from his astonishment, "unless my kind protectors compel me." At this moment Sister Louise auspiciously entered the room.

"Dear friend, thrust me not forth on the coldness of my relatives."

"Thrust you forth, dear child, never. Remain with us as long as you will."

"Then it shall be forever; for where have I met with such uniform kindness since my parents' death as I have here? This is an abode of peace and contentment."

Mr. Rheinberg was so perplexed and embarrassed at this unexpected resolution, that he stared first at the girl, then at the nun, and let them complete their compact without uttering a word.

"Come, now, Grace," said he, angry that he had not interfered sooner, "this is sheer nonsense. I, as your uncle and guardian—you lack a month of eighteen and are still a minor, you know—insist upon your coming home with me." Observing her frown darkly, he continued, "I beg of you, I pray you in the name of heaven, on my bended knees," falling on them, "to come home."

"You are not my guardian, uncle. Having no property left me by my parents, the court appointed none. You did not apply for the guardianship, and therefore until you acquire that right," returned Grace with legal acumen, "you have no authority. Should you obtain that sanction I should return here as soon as I attained my majority; so I beg of you forbear exercising your right," then suddenly as a flash of light she changed her tactics. "Let me remain here a few weeks longer until I grow strong and then I may go. What is the harm in waiting a few weeks?"

In vain Mr. Rheinberg alternately stormed and pleaded, raved and wept. One look of approval from Sister Louise could counteract a thousand such storms and entreaties.

"Why, Grace, what has come over you? You were not wont to be so?"

"Well, uncle, you have my decision," said Grace with firmness, in which might already be seen the strong working of a change.

"I had no idea, my dear girl, that you could be so stubborn."

"Submit to my terms, uncle; a few weeks may work a revolution in my mind."

"I pray so, child," and Mr. Rheinberg left the convent overwhelmed with conflicting emotions, not knowing whether time would bring in a surrender or defiance. He was met at the gate by Arnold, who, unable to endure the suspense, was outside pacing up and down the sidewalk, hoping that Grace would come out with her uncle.

"Why, man," ejaculated Arnold, "where is she? It cannot be possible that they will not permit her to leave!"

"Permit her? Of course they will, but what is worse, Grace does not want to come. She wishes to stay with them."

"Impossible; that is witchcraft."

"I do not know what deviltry it is. I only know the girl wants to stay until she becomes strong, and at the end of a few weeks give me an answer."

"Great heaven! Are we to sit and wait indefinitely for the answer of that foolish girl and allow the nuns to complete the work they have

so well begun? I shall take the constable and have her forcibly taken out."

"You will, eh? Are you her guardian?"

"No. Curse my impotency, but you are her uncle and can be appointed guardian, and remove her from that restraint."

"Fool! I tell you she is not kept against her will. It is of her own accord that she stays there."

"I shall tear down the walls and free her with my own hands," and Arnold ground his teeth in rage.

"Madman, do you not hear it is her choice? She loves the nuns."

"Drag her from there. If you do not she will remain forever; a premonition bids me hasten, to fly and save her. Why wait for the last chance?" said Arnold huskily.

"Come, listen to reason, man; sickness has changed the girl. Interfere now and all the spirits of heaven and hell cannot persuade her to leave. In her feeble condition I would not dare use force if I could. Let us wait until she grows stronger, then she may be sorry for her stubbornness and come home."

"But she may——"

"I tell you we must wait," reiterated Rheinberg. "It is the best plan under the circumstances to leave her alone for a while. In the meanwhile none of my family shall trouble her."

"And I am bound hand and foot," soliloquized Arnold, "and must see her torn from me forever. To think that I am to be outwitted by fate and that chit of a girl maddens me. But hold! Fate,

do I say? There is no fate. In that I am a Sadducee and believe all things come to me as I use my power and will. My will is to have Grace. Then why is there not some means of gaining possession of her? By the power eternal, I must and shall have her."

"Well, mother," said Letitia to Mrs. Rheinberg, "have you been in town and seen father?"

"Yes, I have seen him. Grace won't come home now."

"Let her stay then. Who can help it?"

"And we are not to go there for a while, but to leave her in peace until she grows strong. You know your father feels dreadful about Grace, she looks so thin and miserable. Don't say anything to make him angry."

"Father is so amiable that he forgets everything very quickly; still, under the circumstances, it is better not to provoke him."

"Your father says Arnold is like mad."

"Now, mother, there must be some subtle, mysterious, undefined psychological influence about Grace, for she is not brilliant, she has no intellectual attractions or exquisite physical grace."

"It is you who have a figure and a face, and are sharp and smart and beautiful, my darling."

"Still, mother, Grace has captivated three of the genus homo."

"What is that?"

"I mean that horrid creature, man," replied Letitia, laughing.

"Who were the three after her?"

"Uncle Henry, before he died, told father

something about a minister loving her; then Laval, and now Arnold. There are plenty of girls of the same type as Grace that could not conquer one. I could not love her if I were a man; she is too insipid."

"I don't care a straw for such faces."

"But, mother, I cannot make a ripple on the placid bosom of the lake of love, while Grace has stirred the mighty depths of the ocean. Bitter, bitter thought," sobbed Letitia.

"Your time will come. Never fear, dear," said her mother, tenderly stroking her jet black hair.

The innocent cause of all this commotion sat white and feeble in her chair. "Sister Louise," said Grace to the nun, who was in the room, "come here. My friends, my enemies I should say, will not give me the solitude I ask."

"But if you want it, you shall have it."

"Sister Louise, you are good. Every orphan child in the convent is under your protection. You soothe their little heartaches, dry their tears, bind their wounds and give them when repulsed by the other scholars and nuns, love and kindness, which are as necessary to some natures as bread and water. Your heart is so large it has a niche for all."

"You overrate me," modestly replied the nun.

"For me you have deprived yourself of rest and comfort. You have been vigilant and untiring in your solicitude, not only for recovery, but for that more precious thing—my soul."

"To bring my own soul before God free from rust, pure and uncorrupted, is the one idea, the

guiding star of my life, but to save yours——”

“You would endure anything with pleasure, I know,” interrupted Grace. “I believe if you were called upon to suffer martyrdom for your religion, you would go with the same heroic indifference to torture as Blandina did, whom I have been reading about. She went to her death ‘re-joicing and triumphing as if invited to a marriage supper, not as going to be exposed to wild beasts.’ You are too good. The poor, the sick, the afflicted, the dying have blessed the sweet, gentle, pious, good Sister Louise.”

“Grace, to do a good action I would go far, but to save a soul—that is, to bring it to life everlasting—I would wade through oceans of pain. Grace,” resumed Sister Louise, “I have not sought you, though you have been my dearest friend and I have passionately longed for your conversion. A series of misfortunes has driven your frail bark into this harbor. Am I not the one whom an inscrutable and an omniscient Providence, in His goodness and mercy, has called upon to moor my waif fast into the harbor? Shall I not save you and thus perform a most pleasing duty.”

“’Tis well.”

“I have prayed for this moment,” said Sister Louise trembling with delight, “Oh, God, how long. I thank Thee, it has come.”

“Dear friend,” added Grace, closing her eyes, “I do not wish to leave this calm asylum. I do not wish to hear the noise of the outside world. What shall I do to retain my present ease and

peace of mind?" Poor girl, she only desired oblivion.

"Dearest Grace," and Sister Louise kissed her wildly and rapturously, "be my sister. Come into the folds of our holy religion. 'Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow.' Your past actions will be washed with the holy water of baptism, you will commence life anew."

"Can I ever be like you, loving and beloved?"

"You will be better than I am. 'Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.' Angels will sing hymns of gladness over your redemption. No more care, no more sorrow."

Grace only knew that she loathed the idea of going back to "that bedlam," as she called her aunt's house, with Arnold occupying the background. Here was her release and here would be quietly unraveled the web of her destiny. To remain and enjoy mental torpidity and anæsthesia was a happiness and a temptation which she could not withstand. She opened her eyes and closed them, saying, "Do with me what you will, only keep the noise and clamor of the world away."

Sister Louise again embraced her with the utmost fervor and was immediately on her knees asking heaven to bless her. When the news spread over the convent there was joy for the soul to be regenerated and redeemed through the sufferings of Christ, and each sister repeated her Ave Maria and Pater-noster with additional devotion.

Grace gave herself up to the guidance of her

new spiritual adviser and made every effort to prepare for her conversion.

"The catechism comes back without much exertion," said Grace to Sister Louise, "as I heard it over and over again at school."

"It will not be necessary for you to overtask your mind, dear. The future can and will work admirably in the direction of religious instruction. Do you not find many beautiful maxims and precepts in the New Testament?"

"Yes, and they all seem so new and applicable to myself that my heart opens to their beauty," said Grace, who had never sat at the feet of Hillel, Gamaliel, Confucius or any other distinguished divine and gathered drops of wisdom from them.

"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

"Sister Louise, how happy I should have been had the world acted in such good faith towards me."

"Another proverb is, 'Blessed are the pure in spirit, for they shall see God.'"

"And I shall atone for my wrong. When the messenger of death comes for me I shall see God, shall I not?"

"Indeed you will, dear Grace, for I know you will be a zealous Catholic."

"That I will. The proverb, 'Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God,' deeply impresses me. It is, indeed, a holy office. If some one had stepped in between me and my justly offended betrothed, transformed tears into smiles, brought years of sun-

shine in lieu of misery and wretched lives, it would have been indeed divine."

"But you will be happy now. Take this precious ointment to your soul, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.'"

It was a warm sultry day in the latter part of June when Grace was to be received into the Roman Catholic Church. The roses with their blood-red, white and wellow faces were in full bloom, the sun poured down his rays of intense heat, regardless of man, beasts or plants.

Grace was anxiously waiting to go through the ceremony to bind her to that religion of which Christ said, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Father Knowen, of the College, and Sister Louise were her sponsors. In response to a question by the priest, Grace selected the name of Catharine as her religious one, and after interrogating her on her new faith and receiving the correct replies, he made the sign of the cross upon her forehead and breast. A grain of blessed salt was then given her, followed by solemn prayers and exorcisms to cast out the unclean spirit in her. After more inquiries and answers she was anointed with the holy oil and the words, "I anoint thee with the oil of salvation in Christ Jesus, our Lord, that thou mayest have eternal life. Amen." When the holy water was poured over her three times "in the form of a cross," the priest at the same time said, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The ceremony was concluded

with the words, "Go in peace, and the Lord be with thee. Amen," and the new convert was taken in the arms of Sister Louise with emotions akin to ecstasy. She could scarcely believe that what she had yearned, hoped and prayed for had come to pass.

"You passed through the ordeal with a calmness that was astonishing," said Sister Louise.

"Thank God it is over. Henceforth no one shall tear me from my peaceful retreat," responded the newly made Catharine.

And the nuns devoutly added, "*Omnia ad dei gloriam.*"

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Glad you dropped in, Everard," said Berkhoff.

"Too bad that Mrs. Silverbaum's house has been burned; uninsured, too. I regret it especially for your sake. She is now left penniless. I sympathize with you, I do indeed. Poor fellow, all troubles fall on you."

"Ha, ha! he, he!" laughed Berkhoff, "it's the best thing that could have happened for me. You see, she has been living with us since we have gone to housekeeping—thanks to your goodness—and with her house let furnished at a good price she felt pretty independent, and made things uncomfortable at times. She hasn't exactly forgiven me yet for not being rich, you see, but now I can tame the old lady by giving her just as much as she had before. I am prosperous and will take care of her with pleasure."

"She was opposed to you when you lost, but before, when she thought you had money, she persuaded her daughter to listen to your suit."

"I know, but then I cannot be too kind to her, as she is Rebecca's mother. Dear Rebecca, who would not give me up when I was poor."

"There are few Rebeccas," quietly remarked Everard.

"Don't be hinting, I remember what you did

for me, but come now, don't you think she has a big heart?"

"Indeed, if I had not thought so," replied Everard seriously, "I should not have induced her to be true to her promise."

"I knew you would indorse her. I want to tell you some good news. I have put into the bank one thousand dollars as my first installment of freedom."

"You are free now, I am sure. You are able to pay your notes as they fall due; your business is increasing and if things continue, and you live long enough, you have the prospect of being a rich man," said Everard gayly.

"Stop," responded Berkhoff earnestly, "I shall never be free until every cent of indebtedness is paid off. It is my nightmare and I must get rid of it."

"And you will. No fear. Such honest souls as you must succeed with the great wish of their hearts—to have unsullied names."

"Good-morning, Mr. Everard," said Mrs. Berkhoff, gayly tripping in.

"I need not ask you how you are, for you are as blooming as a rose," added Everard as he warmly shook hands with her.

"And as happy as a sunflower."

"Indeed you are a sunflower to me, Rebecca. Is mother feeling better?" asked Berkhoff kindly.

"No, she will not get over the loss in a hurry. She grieves all the more because the insurance had expired just the day before. I told her to renew it. Before she was always particular about the hour, but this time a strange fatality

kept her back. I have worried a little over it myself," and a cloud gathered over Mrs. Berkhoff's face.

"It is so much better, you little fool," said her husband affectionately. "You can give her everything and show how good you can be to her. I will be a son to her."

"Good-day, Mrs. Bennett," said Everard, meeting her in the street and inquiring for her father.

"I have just come from the house and was surprised to hear that he had gone to his office. I am so pleased."

"Your disposition is such, madam, that it is a happiness to be acquainted with you. It is no compliment that I am paying you," said Everard as he observed Mrs. Bennett color, "only a just tribute. Is your sister well?"

"No, sir—yes, I mean," responded Mrs. Bennett, blushing at her contradictory remarks. "Good-day, I have an appointment with Mr. Bennett."

"Amelia," mentally exclaimed Everard, "this day shall decide my fate," and he walked rapidly in the direction of Mr. Hill's house.

Amelia came in, looking pale but majestic, and he said: "I thank you for your goodness, Miss Hill."

"For receiving you? I would do the same to any other gentleman," returned she coldly.

"But I have come again after having been repulsed."

"That is your own affair," answered Amelia haughtily.

"And I have come to repeat the same thing, Amelia, I love you."

Amelia cast down her eyes, turned very white, but made no reply.

"What does your silence imply, yes or no?" eagerly asked Everard.

"It is neither. I said nothing."

"Then you do not care for me?"

"I did not say so."

"Then you bid me hope and make me one of the happiest of men," added Everard, springing to his feet with a flushed face.

"You know I do not, will not, let myself love you. Leave me instantly," rejoined Amelia in a burst of excitement.

"I must not leave you now. Why will you not love me if you can?"

"Do not question me, do not probe my heart."

"Then you do love me, peerless Amelia?" said Everard smilingly. "Do not be unreasonable. Why not respond to the dictates of your heart?"

"I must not; leave me, leave me, I say," implored Amelia.

"I shall go if you command me, but I shall return again, and again, until your heart overcomes all scruples."

"This is cruel, Mr. Everard. These scruples can never be surmounted."

"Amelia, I know why you scorned my love the other time, and why you refuse me now. I do detest to say it, but it is because I am a descendant from—because I am a Jew."

Amelia hung her head; warm, scarlet blushes overspread her face.

"I am answered," said Everard mournfully. "Since the day I rescued you from the water and your dear head rested on my shoulder, I have loved you. At first I, too, like you, had religious scruples; then my love increased to such a height that it overleapt the barrier as a trifle. My love asked no more questions. It said nothing about Jew or Gentile. It simply said imperiously, 'I want Amelia, a human being like myself, subject to nature's laws of love and death.' Amelia, answer. Is there no response to the love which, as I stand here, consumes my life?"

"So I am to pay with my hand for the life you so disinterestedly rescued. Your demands are high, Mr. Everard."

"In the name of heaven do not misunderstand me, Amelia. I would not have your hand unaccompanied by your heart. I assure you if any of the young ladies of my party had met with the same accident I should have endeavored to save them just as quickly."

"Then I was nothing to you?"

"You appealed to my manhood at that time as all women do, but now my arms would be gladly outstretched to keep off the rough winds of heaven. Your gentle nature, your firm dignity, your unsurpassed moral goodness, to say nothing of your personal loveliness, drew me towards you like a magnet and will not let me go. Do not deny it, I am your affinity."

"Dare I deny what you say, wise discoverer?" said Amelia sarcastically.

"I do not mean that I am learned——"

"As for learning, criticism, and refinement,"

interrupted Amelia, "you may be an Aristarchus, for all I know."

"I do not know what term you may give my feelings. You may not call them delicate. If, on analysis, I find them right, I indulge them and pursue a certain course to attain what I wish."

"Are you always successful?"

"Heretofore I have been. I have overcome your contempt, I have gained, I hope, your esteem and, Amelia, I must gain your love or——"

"What, die?" replied she contemptuously.

"No," answered Everard with dignity, "but live to see my brightest, brightest hopes blasted, my energies wasted. To see perhaps vices that do not now exist take the place of my ambition and worldly expectations for the future. Would not this be a mortal wound, a moral of death? And you do love me, perhaps, and will not tell me so. Why not, answer me?"

"Not to-day. Another time."

"If you were hungry and feverish, and a cluster of purple, luscious looking grapes were near you, what would you do?"

"I should pluck them," said Amelia archly.

"Put yourself in my place and think how famished and thirsty my soul is for you. Oh, Amelia, be true to yourself, and answer the promptings of your heart. Come to me; my heart yearns for you."

Amelia slightly inclined her head, her eyes drooped, her face became suffused with burning blushes. Everard drew near, but Amelia, with a sudden return of her old prejudice and with a deep shudder, recoiled, saying, "Never."

The shock to Everard's pride was so great that he was overtaken by a mighty calm and rose with all the dignity of a Spanish Don and said coldly: "Miss Hill, allow me to bid you good-bye."

And Amelia, fearing to give way to her suppressed emotions, saw him depart without a word.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Mr. Rheinberg was leisurely sipping his coffee and eating his breakfast this tropical June morning. The excessive heat rendered eating an exertion and caused him a little irritation as the steaming food added to his discomfort.

"Bon jour, papa. Il fait chaud aujourd'hui, mais vraiment, Je vous aime," said Letitia, tripping in with her morning dress of white cambric trimmed with ruffles of the same material.

"Why, Letitia," returned her father, "you look fresh as paint. But, for heaven's sake, speak in your mother tongue, so that I can understand you."

"Never mind, I bring you a tribute of love," and she placed by Mr. Rheinberg's plate a bunch of the most beautiful scarlet geraniums.

Mr. Rheinberg regarded Letitia affectionately and carelessly arranged the flowers on her dress and hair. The effect was admirable and she looked superb.

"Je suis charmante, n'est ce pas?" Letitia gave her father one of her bewitching smiles. He did not understand her words, but he understood the gestures and the smiles of his beautiful child, and to him she was everything.

"Where is the paper to-day, papa? I always glance first at the news of the day, though the

events of this town, as a general thing, are not very exciting."

"Why, child, I have not seen it this morning. It is so hot that all I can do is to eat my breakfast, without thinking of anything else. Clara, another biscuit, please."

Mrs. Rheinberg had been sitting quietly at the table; she was accustomed to see her daughter lavish all the affection she had to bestow upon her husband.

"I do wonder if these mischievous children have not taken it again. I told Rachel and Willie never to touch it before I was through with it," said Letitia crossly. "It is such a pleasure to read and eat together."

"Those rogues! I will have to put them in the calaboose if they do anything so bad again!" returned her father half ironically; for though he was swayed by his daughter's beauty and talent, his heart was very soft where his smaller children were concerned.

"Are you going already?" asked Mrs. Rheinberg of her husband.

"Yes, I must hurry, as I am going to-day to Grace; I believe by this time she will be strong enough, and think and hope she will be ready to come home. Letitia," continued Mr. Rheinberg gravely. "I hope I have not spoken in vain about the treatment of your unfortunate and still delicate cousin. For the sake of us all I hope you will do your best."

"Yes," spoke her mother, "do your best. You know this gossiping town has already something to say."

"What a *bête noir* I must be," replied Letitia tartly, and grating her teeth. "I declare——"

Her sentence was never finished, as at that instant the bell was rung so violently that it startled the whole household and brought them all simultaneously—the maid included—to the door. There stood Arnold with a newspaper clutched in his trembling hand, his face having a white and frightened look.

"Good Lord," exclaimed Mrs. Rheinberg, "what a face you have!"

"Why, Arnold man, what is the matter?" said Mr. Rheinberg with a terrified air, for fear is as contagious as small-pox. "Come in. Children, go to your breakfast." Susan, the maid, wisely inferred that her presence was not wanted, obeyed the order of Mr. Rheinberg by forming the rear of the retreating column of children.

Arnold, with Letitia, her father and mother, were quickly seated in the family sitting-room, the latter three eagerly awaiting what was to follow.

"Here," remarked Arnold, as with a shivering hand he gave the paper with a marked paragraph to Mr. Rheinberg, who glanced at it in a dazed way without making any attempt to read it aloud.

"Father, do give me that paper and let me read it. I am almost dying to know what it contains to affect you and Mr. Arnold in this terrible manner," and Letitia rather authoritatively took it from his half-opened hand. She immediately read the following lines:

"CONVERSION OF A JEWESS."

"It is announced that the daughter of the late Mr. Feld, who ended his life in so tragic a manner some twelve months ago, was converted to the Roman Catholic religion the day before yesterday. The young lady was taken ill at the convent in the month of March and unable to be removed. She recovered, but becoming attached to the sisters, she embraced their religion. The appropriate rites took place in the chapel attached to the convent in the presence of the fathers of the college, sisters, pupils of the convent and a few of our prominent Catholic citizens. Though many of the Jews of to-day are indifferent, both in practice and profession of their faith, being often mere deists, yet it rarely occurs that any become proselytes to another religion.

"The congregation of the Daughters of Zion, founded in Paris in 1843 for the conversion of Jews and for the care of newly converted Jewish children, cannot boast of being a success. Perhaps their reverence for the antiquity of their creed may restrain them, but at all events their conversion to another religion is very rare. It is a remarkable and notable fact that when conversions do take place, they are generally from Judaism to Catholicism and vice-versa. It is to be hoped that Miss Feld will find in her adopted faith that peace and happiness which lately she did not find in her own."

The stillness during and for a few moments

after the reading was so intense that it was painful. It was as if a bomb-shell had been thrown into their midst and they had not recovered from the explosion.

"The God of Israel look down upon us," cried Mrs. Rheinberg.

"God forgive me," exclaimed her husband.

"What is to be done?" said Arnold, who was only conscious that his love and his victim were eluding his grasp.

It crossed Letitia's mind that her selfishness from the Alpha to the Omega of this miserable affair had done much of the work. But so quickly did all disagreeable impressions vanish that she was ready to respond to Arnold's question with the same interrogation, "What is to be done?"

"I do not know what to do," added Mr. Rheinberg. "Grace has just attained her majority; no more authority can be used. I am wild with grief. What shall we do?"

"I told you not to leave her there," groaned Mrs. Rheinberg, sitting on a low stool and rocking herself to and fro. "We will mourn for her as though she were dead."

Arnold and Letitia gave her a disdainful smile in reply.

"You miserable women," shouted Mr. Rheinberg, aroused and fairly beside himself with anger, "you are the cause of it, as you women are of all trouble under the sun. Where she should have found love and tenderness, what was there but dislike and coldness?"

"Cease these foolish bickerings," remon-

strated Arnold, endeavoring to compose himself. "Do I not feel the teeth of the sword? Let us to work. Every moment lost strengthens her and *them*." The last word referred to the nuns and was spoken with concentrated vindictiveness.

"No need to hurry now. No flank movement can or will dislodge Grace. Take my word for it, she is irrevocably lost to us. She is of age; compulsion cannot be used, and if it could, upon leaving the convent she would remain a Catholic anyway. As the home of so many prominent persons of that creed will be offered her, she will not be likely to stay in this humble home of ours," and Letitia gazed on her surroundings with a mournful air.

"Never mind what she will do. Bring her out of the convent. The influence of her relatives and those who love her must cause the revocation of a faith she does not understand. Bring her out, bring her out!" vehemently reiterated Arnold.

"Grace does not understand the doctrines of any religion. And are you the lover into whose outstretched arms she is to fall and whose eloquent tongue is to lead her back to Judaism?" and Letitia regarded him with a contemptuous smile.

"That girl's scorn! By heaven I will teach her to laugh and sneer at my enthusiastic love," and the angry blood leapt into Arnold's dark face.

"Come, no wrangling now," said Mr. Rheinberg, perceiving the man's surging passion. "I

am going to the convent, find out all I can and see if anything can be done."

"We must come out victorious. I shall accompany you to the convent gate," said Arnold, forgetting Letitia's remarks.

The sun, which had been shining in unrivaled splendor, was suddenly obscured by a dark, heavy cloud rising in the southwest, the lightning commenced to play and the thunder to roll. The elements were in unison with the wrathful spirits.

"God, that I had the strength of Samson," prayed Arnold in his rage, "that I could slaughter the nuns, demolish the convent and carry off the fair Catholic. Ah, fair Catholic, what avails the power of a Liliputian against the Brobdingnagians?"

"I hope for the best and fear the worst," said Mr. Rheinberg, as his heart rose and sank.

"The poor human mind will cling to hope as the drowning mariner to a plank, and hug it long after rescue is impossible. Its dreams paint a fairy picture with Grace returning as my willing, happy bride, and the background filled with serene smiling faces. Hope is the elixir vitæ. But these horrible convent walls dissolve my charming drawing," said Arnold, stamping and cursing.

"Quiet, Arnold, quiet."

"Now that you are here, you must and shall bring Grace out," gesticulated Arnold wildly. "I shall wait outside."

Mr. Rheinberg was so confused when in the nun's parlor he scarcely knew how to proceed.

"Can I see my niece?" he asked of the portress.

"Certainly," answered the nun without a moment's hesitation.

"Grace," said her uncle as she came into the room, "what have you done? I beg of you, with tears in my eyes, to come back to your home and to your religion."

"Impossible, uncle."

Mr. Rheinberg threatened and commanded in a hundred intelligible and unintelligible, coherent and incoherent sentences.

"Not only, dear uncle, will I not retract, but I am firmly resolved to remain where I am for the present."

"Grace, you cannot mean it."

"I do, uncle. There is no hesitation on my part now," replied his niece, who had wrought herself up to a high pitch of inflexibility. "I shall never abjure the creed I have taken up. When I am perfectly strong"—she always fell back on her weakness—"I shall decide what course of life is best for me to pursue. The nuns have kindly offered me this asylum and I have accepted it."

"Bitter hour! Ruth, Ruth, what has come over your child?" sobbed Mr. Rheinberg.

"Dear uncle, spare me those tears. I know my mother in heaven is satisfied. I love you dearly, but I shall never go back to your house. I bear no ill-will to any one in the world, thanks to my religion, which bids 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.' Bid me a loving, not an eternal, farewell. You will come to see me again when you feel more loving and

more forgiving towards me. That time will come, for I shall pray for you." Grace spoke sweetly, but in a dignified and composed manner. Withal she appeared so spiritual in her plain black dress, short golden hair, combed straight back, the blue veins on her forehead revealing their network through her transparent skin, that her uncle despaired of her return. He was conscious that a change had come over her in will and spirit, since she had been in the convent.

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"The devil!" said Arnold as he beat a hasty

retreat. "If it had come to a pitched battle those hags would have fought fiercely as a band of Amazons and vanquished me, too!"

"Sister Louise," said Grace, after the intended violence of Arnold, "the daring invasion of that man has brought things to a climax. Catholicism has provided me with a charming place of solitude, with ease and comfort, but it has not procured me what I most desire—perfect freedom from intrusion."

"Dearest Catharine," said the nun, calling her by the baptismal name, "you have only to follow the desire you have so long nourished and become one of us."

"Yes, to be one of the sisterhood has from a little seed now developed into a full-grown flower. I now choose the vocation with my whole heart and soul."

"The vows, dear, which are to bind you to this community, are simple and easy. The principle ones—in fact they are all—are chastity, poverty, and obedience."

"Dear Sister Louise, I can keep them very easily. Marriage is blotted out from the map of my life; to be poor is not changing my condition, and I am more than content to follow faithfully the regulations and laws of order. I am now ready to conform to all things, and eager to enter upon my duty as a postulant."

Sister Louise apprised the Bishop of Catharine's intentions. He came, questioned her, and ascertaining that she was resolved upon the step, gave her his approval and blessing.

Catharine, with her plain black dress, now wore a white cap.

"Dear Catharine," said Sister Louise, "my heart bounds with joy. The very acme of my wishes are soon to be fulfilled."

"I am glad I can remain here with you, instead of going, as so many of the postulants and novices do, to the mother home in Kentucky."

"I did not go there, either," returned the nun. "Mother Therese says you are not to teach, as you are not strong enough. You have only to attend to your religious exercises and works of devotion."

"My heart swells with enthusiasm as I think of the holy course before me."

"Your friends come regularly every day and demand admittance, Catharine."

"They may come, but they *must* go. I experience the force of Christ's saying, 'And Jesus said unto them, verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.'"

"Ah, Catharine, you are a jewel, 'a pearl above price.'"

Days, weeks and months drifted by. Though Arnold's design was always baffled, and seemed less and less realizable, still he clung to it as

tenaciously as the alchemist to the chimerical idea of the transmutation of the baser metals into gold. Letitia was the ignis-fatuus that drew him on. When he was despondent and dejected she would soothe him with fresh hopes, and his thirsty soul saw water and green fields in the distance.

"How I dislike these dark, short days of December," said Letitia.

"Yes," replied Arnold, who was now a daily visitor at Mr. Rheinberg's house, "they remind me that the months are slipping by and nothing done. We ought to pursue that girl more closely."

"That we should," added Letitia, endeavoring to humor him, "we should torment them a little."

"Miss Letitia, you are the caryatid to my trouble. I thank you. When your father and mother will not countenance my plans for rescuing Grace, and no doubt regard them as quixotic, you are always ready to give me encouragement and sympathy."

"Mr. Arnold, I would do anything in my power to accomplish your wish. You seem so attached to Grace, and so melancholy without her that I pity you."

"I can only repeat my thanks."

"Do you know, father will not allow her room to be occupied. He thinks she may yet return. Every evening he goes in; of course he finds it vacant, and does it noiselessly as if in fear of waking some one."

"She will never return voluntarily, I fear," sighed Arnold.

"That is what mother and I say. Mother grumbles because the children are a little crowded; but no, that room must be kept just so."

"Just so," repeated Mr. Rheinberg, entering the room, "but I am going once more for her and then no more, nevermore."

"Why, it is night, the sun is down; the nuns will not admit you."

"I think they will. It is not late. I feel the wish so strong upon me that I must go. Arnold, don't come along to-night. Maybe I will have better luck if you are not outside, knocking and pounding at the walls."

"Stay here till father comes back."

"Go on then, Rheinberg," responded Arnold.

Quiet reigned in the convent when Sister Louise said, "Catharine, there is some one to see you."

"Why not give the usual answer?"

"It is your uncle, and he insists upon seeing you."

"So late; shall I go?"

"As you will," answered the nun softly.

"I think I shall go down and see him. I shall not be gone long," and she threw a black shawl over her head which concealed her cap. With a tearful eye and trembling heart she went into the parlor.

"Dear Grace," said Mr. Rheinberg, with outstretched arms.

"Uncle," said his niece, rushing into his embrace and sobbing as if her heart would break, "this must be a final good-bye."

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"Talking of jewels makes me think of Grace. I suppose she gave hers back to Lavallo."

"Of course she did," answered Letitia sharply.

"How long a time does Arnold wish to give you?"

"He says I can complete preparations in two weeks. My trousseau will receive additions in all the large cities we pass through."

"Happy Letitia! I am afraid you will forget me."

"Why, mother, how foolish. I shall write two or three times a week, and Arnold says in a year we shall see you again. Think how grand that will sound, 'My daughter, Mrs. Bernard Arnold, is coming. She has been traveling all over the world.' That makes you smile through your tears."

"But I shall miss you at the table."

"Take a leaf out of it so that it will look as crowded as ever."

"But I shall miss you everywhere," repeated the mother.

"Imagine I am here; or, better still, that you are rid of your wayward girl."

"I can only content myself, dear, with the thought that my suffering is your happiness."

"A mother's love is the pearl of human affections," and Letitia embraced her mother.

"Let happen what will, remember my heart, my arms and my doors are ever wide open to receive you."

"Why, what should happen?" returned Letitia frowningly.

"I hope nothing, dear. I only say so to remind you that a mother's love never dies."

"That is rather a fine illustration of immutability in life," added Letitia a little sarcastically.

The night before Arnold's marriage he walked round and round the convent, and bade an eternal good-bye to one who was praying on her knees in the chapel. Letitia would certainly not have been overpleased had she witnessed this exhibition of her lover's farewell to her cousin. It was not exactly what a devoted suitor might be expected to do on the eve of his marriage.

Arnold was depressed as he walked home to the hotel, but his gloomy agitation evaporated with the morning sun, and the afternoon found him a comparatively happy bridegroom. A rabbi had come from St. Louis to perform the marriage ceremony, which was strictly private.

The newly wedded pair left the same afternoon on the steamer for New York via St. Louis. The heart of Mrs. Bernard Arnold beat high with the joyous anticipation of plunging into that life which she hoped would be embroidered with all the beautiful flowers that her youthful vision had so often framed.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It was in the early part of September and the yellow fever, which had been raging for some months in the South, was now checked. However, in the town of D—, the home of the Hills, though every effort had been made to enforce a rigid quarantine, disinfect and even bar out incoming steamers and trains, the fever had broken out with a leap and a bound in a most virulent form and ended in an epidemic, much to the alarm of Amelia; not for herself, but for her half-invalid father. She had endeavored since her harsh dismissal of Everard to continue the even tenor of her way. She taught in the Sunday school, she had an extra class for expounding the Bible, devoted herself more vigorously to church duties, was more patient than ever, still she had grown timid and was afraid of herself. Her love spoke with such a loud voice that she feared when Alice was with her, who was a vigilant watcher, that might hear the call. In vain she told herself of the degradation such an alliance would bring, that it would be an abomination, that there could be no happiness in such a surrender. Her weakness, as she called it, grew greater as the call grew stronger and the imperturbable Amelia commenced to lose that composure and serenity which was one of her specific characteristics.

When the little yellow placard was placed on the Hill residence Everard rang the bell with hope, but not with assurance. "Amelia, Miss Hill, thank God it is not you," he cried as he entered the room. "It is your father. Nurses are scarce and incompetent here—Mr. Bennett is ill, too; in fact, the fever has become such a scourge that not one is to be obtained. I have been around the fever—assign me my duty."

Amelia, disregarding the conflict in her mind, anxious about her father and Bennett, too, said: "If you can, you will follow me."

After six weeks of faithful and arduous nursing, with Mr. Hill and Bennett convalescing, Everard found himself alone with Amelia. "Proud heart," said he, "is there no relenting, for love me you do. Capitulate, for I shall follow you until I may rightly take my place by your side. I am waiting for my answer."

"You have nursed my father, but——"

"I deserve some reward."

"Is there nothing for nothing in this world?"

"To be candid, Amelia, though nothing is not anything, yet it demands something and you cannot get something for nothing."

"And that is love which boasts of making sacrifices and is ready to die for it?"

"Sacrifices and death for a beloved one have a recompense in the thought that one is loved or will be loved as an offering for the sacrifice. Ah, Amelia! we cannot get beyond our limitations and we are so limited. Why argue and combat that love which gives nothing for nothing, but wants something for something?"

"Then I surrender,"—he started eagerly, but he drew back as she concluded—"to my duty."

"Never, Amelia, shall you become my wife on those terms. A truce to such words. Let us say good-bye."

Amelia looked up wistfully, her eyes suffused with tears. "Mr. Everard, I—I——"

"Amelia, dearest, let me help you. You love me," and Everard, knowing by intuition that the battle was over, the victory won, took her in his arms, where she wept tears of joy and sorrow.

"Thank heaven, dear, your father consents, though the probation which he puts us on is very hard," said Everard to Amelia Hill.

"I think father is very wise in this case. If we cannot be engaged a year or more without conflicting on account of our religious opinions, it would not do to take up the pilgrimage of life together. Ours is an extraordinary case and requires extraordinary measures. And, Mark, our ideas may change."

"For heaven's sake, do you mean to say that your old religious prejudices may return and that you may learn to dislike me?"

"No, no," returned Amelia smiling, "I have no doubt I shall learn to love you more and more if that be possible. We may learn to think more alike."

"I shall always think you one of the loveliest of women and do not wish to influence you one iota. If you could, through your own good sense, believe somewhat as I do, I might incline your way; consequently we should be very

happy. I worship you, Amelia, and not your religion."

"That is violating a commandment, 'Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.' But, Mark, to talk seriously, I have painful news to communicate. Don't turn pale. It is only that father has decided to travel and I am to go with him."

"Amelia, this is cruel. Why did you not oppose it? Your father would have acceded to your request."

"But Dr. Wilson says it is absolutely necessary for father to have diversity and that he will find in traveling. We shall not be gone more than two or three months."

"But what am I to do in the interim?"

"You can keep your time occupied, I think. First, your numerous clients require your attention; secondly, you will have to write me daily, and those letters you cannot intrust to an amanuensis."

"No one shall handle the paper on which I write you," replied Everard jealously.

"How guarded you will be," laughed Amelia.

"I am afraid I shall not have many letters, as you will have to manufacture the paper yourself."

"Do not take the words so literally, you know how I feel."

"You want latitude, like a poet."

"To think," said Mrs. Bennett gayly as she came in, "that Mark Anthony Everard is to be my brother-in-law! Your hand, Mark."

"Who told you, Alice?" asked Amelia, blushing.

"Father, to be sure. I know all," returned Mrs. Bennett with a merry twinkle in her eye.

"Well, Mrs. Bennett, I hope you and your husband approve of our mutually good selection," said Everard.

"Well, I declare," returned Mrs. Bennett laughing heartily, "that is assumption for you. I admire you all the more for it. Charlie will give you his opinion when he sees you, and whatever that will be, it will express mine."

"Is that the way you are going to talk when you are married, Amelia, through the mind of another?"

"I shall be more independent than that, Mark."

"I know better. You will make a most docile wife, Amelia. This is a changeable world, my dear Mr. Everard," rejoined Mrs. Bennett.

After Everard's departure Alice said: "Amelia, I did not think he would be here when I came in. After father told me I ran nearly every step to the house. Think how undignified I must have looked."

"You make me laugh."

"Indeed, Amelia, I do not want to laugh. I am surprised after the way you talked to me that you have engaged yourself to Everard."

"Did you not tell me to love him, Alice?"

"Yes, I did. If he were only a Christian! What a pity he is not."

"I would not have him otherwise than he is," returned Amelia proudly.

"Ah, the inconsistency, the perversity of hu-

man nature! I am afraid you will be turning Jewess next," said Mrs. Bennett, dolefully.

"No fear," responded Amelia contemptuously.

"Come, Amelia, we were always the most loving of sisters," added Mrs. Bennett persuasively.

"And shall continue to be, provided you speak of Mark as he deserves."

"I cannot but speak favorably of him. You know I always considered him one of nature's noblemen."

"And you will be kind to him when I am gone? He will be lonely; you must cheer him up."

"Certainly I shall. Charlie thinks him entertaining; in fact, grand. The only thing I feel sore about is the indignation, possibly the ostracism, of society."

"I shall not live with society, but with Everard," declared Amelia emphatically.

"To be sure, dear. I live only for Charlie, still I love society. It makes me cheerful to swim with it."

"For instance, Alice, if Charlie were falsely branded as a forger, could you, would you, live without society smiling upon you?"

"What a question!" said Mrs. Bennett trembling. "I would and could live happily with Charlie, if I were on a desert. If society would wrong him, I would spurn it."

"Very well, if society scorn Mark Everard without a just cause, I shall pay no attention to it. What did father say about it?"

"Not much. Of course, he would have preferred it if your choice had fallen on some one

of our denomination. He dreads the result of such mixed marriages."

"Poor father, I am sorry I had to grieve him, but I was compelled to yield to my love. It was too strong for me to control. Who knows, Everard may yet reject the name of Jew."

"Very nice," said Mrs. Berkhoff as Everard came in with her husband to dinner one day. "I have not seen you at our table I can't tell when. I suppose we should not have the honor to-day if Miss Hill had not left the town."

"Come, come, Mrs. Berkhoff, no bantering. You know I esteem you as a sincere friend, but Miss Hill's name is sacred. On that subject I am easily wounded and very firm."

"You forget how you once persuaded another to do right?"

"That is just it. I am always in for doing right."

"And may no one take the liberty of advising you to pursue the same course?" asked Mrs. Berkhoff.

"Where is the man or woman who can say I ever wronged anyone? As for those religious discriminations I must settle them with my own conscience and account to God for my actions."

"Then you are engaged?"

"I did not say so."

"Why these quibbles? But I forget, you are a lawyer."

"Never mind, Rebecca, I am afraid there's no change in Everard. God knows I have talked

to him enough about the future. He is bound to be sorry for it, but if he will shut his eyes to the trouble, who can help it? Remember, I told you often enough and in time, too," said Mr. Berkhoff.

"You have acted as a friend and warned me. But now if I insist upon acting blindly, as you call it, well, I am ready to suffer the consequences. Now, under the circumstances—I shall if I can—it is presuming upon friendship to say more."

"You will not be angry with us, Mr. Everard? I could not allow you. You have contributed so much toward my happiness that I should like to return it," added Mrs. Berkhoff.

"You can best accomplish that, my good friend, by not mentioning the affair which troubles you and your husband. I appreciate your kindness, I assure you, notwithstanding my decision to act contrary to your advice!"

"Mr. Everard, how do you do?" said Mrs. Silverbaum, sailing in like a balloon.

"I am very well, thank you; and so are you, I see."

"Ah, unfortunate, lost everything," sighed Mrs. Silverbaum.

"But, mother," said Mr. Berkhoff, "why bother when I can give you everything? Is there anything missing?"

"No, you are too good, that is all. Mr. Everard, I pray for you every evening."

"Thank you," rejoined he, laughing, "I stand in need of your prayers."

"Not that; you misunderstand me. It is for the gold mine I have through you."

"Through me? Your daughter would not have eloped, I assure you."

"Rebecca is no more the gold mine, but my son-in-law, Berkhoff. Isaac in this short time has shown himself a son, one true, good, loving son. He is the gold mine. Rebecca is lead to him."

"Why, mother," answered Berkhoff turning red, "what are you talking about? I have been too much in love with Rebecca to think much of you yet; wait till that cools down a little, which I hope will never be, and then I shall be good."

"Oh, Mr. Everard, he is the best man in the whole world," returned Mrs. Silverbaum.

"You are not far from wrong. I am a great admirer of your son-in-law. He has a large, honest heart."

"Everard, for heaven's sake stop. You know I am coarse and uneducated," said Berkhoff, greatly embarrassed.

"Pshaw! old fellow, don't blush and be so nervous. I believe you can do all kind of good things, but you can't stand compliments. Mrs. Berkhoff, are you not proud of your husband?"

"Indeed, I am learning his true worth more and more every day. There is no one like him," replied she fondly.

"But, Everard, you must praise Rebecca for her goodness. She encouraged me to pay off the last cent of my honest debts, and, with the help of God, I will soon do it. When that strug-

gle is ever, where will there be a happier couple than my sunflower and me?"

"Berkhoff, who is more satisfied than a happily married man? Do you envy the king on his throne, the President in the White House, or the millionaire in his palace?"

"Envy, is it! Indeed I do not. If I had not got my Rebecca I would have envied every man with a loving wife. Now I have everything—Rebecca is my world."

"Come," added Rebecca, blushing, "dinner is ready."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Light cirrus clouds above, masses of soft crystals driven by a strong wind flying in the air, the thermometer at freezing point, all contributed to render it infinitely more pleasant indoors than on the streets one afternoon in February. So thought all the good people of C——, a large town in Tennessee. Very few pedestrians were to be seen, yet there was one man with a tall, well developed figure enveloped in a heavy overcoat, who appeared to defy the elements. From his silvery appearance he seemed to have been exposed for some time. He walked on with measured tread and satisfied air, but upon close scrutiny it was observable that his face was tinged with an undefinable sadness.

The man walked along to the door of an humble cottage, knocked and was admitted by a ragged child, whose little face, begrimed with dirt, lighted up with pleasure as the former said, "Ho, Johnny, here is something for you to-day," drawing a parcel out of his great coat and throwing it to him.

"Dear mother," said the boy to a woman lying on the bed in the room, "is it Christmas again? Am I so good that Santa Claus sends me these things by this good man?" and Johnny, some five years old, laid his precious gifts, a pair of

heavy shoes and some warm merino socks, on the bed.

"What makes you think me Santa Claus?" asked the man.

"Because mother told me he wears a big coat. But then he was here not long ago," exclaimed the puzzled child.

"Hush, child, do you not see it is our beloved pastor whom God sends to us? Place a chair for him by the bed."

"As he has his hat off I know who he is, but as he brings so many things to good children, I thought he must be Santa Claus."

"Never mind, Johnny, but thank him and the good Father above who does not forget the widow and the fatherless."

The boy sank on his knees by his mother's bed, folded his hands, and in a pathetic voice said a sweet, little prayer of thanks to God for his mercy and goodness.

The minister was much moved and said: "Good woman, do not thank me. It is my duty as a shepherd to look out for my flock. I did not know of your illness until yesterday, when my sister told me. Be comforted. As the Lord has afflicted you with the loss of your husband, it becomes doubly my duty to see that you do not want."

"I should not complain," replied the Widow Brown, "and neither do I. I have been brought up, I trust, in the ways of the Lord and take example from His Son not to murmur. After my husband's death I smothered my sighs, repressed my tears, and tried to be contented in work. The

weather has been unusually severe, you know—I hear everywhere of your works of benevolence and generosity—wages too small, and I could not supply the humble wants of myself and child. Work grew slack, my health gave way under the strain and here I am in a sick bed in the depths of winter, without anything to carry me over the season,” and the poor woman, who had seen better days, wept unrestrainedly.

“Fear not,” the minister responded kindly. “‘Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.’ The Lord will provide. Let your mind be at rest, for you shall not be forgotten.” A mild compassion beamed from his eyes, and the widow’s heart was comforted and cheered with kind assurances which she knew were always fulfilled by this servant of the Lord.

When the minister went out into the street he felt not the bitter cold, for the geniality of his heart was warmth enough for him. As he walked towards his home in the outskirts of the town he went into many little cottages, left promises of assistance and words of comfort, which fell like heavenly manna from his lips.

“Laura, I see you anticipated my coming,” said the minister as the door opened from within.

“Well, dear Arthur,” replied his sister in a gentle, reproachful tone. “I have been watching for you this half hour. I have been a steady sentinel at my post and not a single person passed in that time. I have been quite miserable thinking of the long walk you were hav-

ing in this rough weather and night approaching, too. Are you not almost frozen?" As she spoke she divested her brother of his overcoat and then drew him affectionately into the sitting-room, where his dressing gown and slippers were awaiting him.

"No, not exactly frozen, but I was not sorry when I saw before me this comfortable-looking, two-story brick building," returned Arthur Montmartre smiling.

"How desolate our garden would look without those evergreens. Not even on the guelder rose, is to be seen a crimson leaf."

"The evergreens are emblematical of life everlasting. A lesson may be extracted from the beautiful roses. In the summer they distill perfume for many a lady's bower; a breath from the God of nature freezes their buds, scatters their leaves and suppresses the flowing of the sap, the lifeblood of plants. A breath from Him above and mortals as well as plants spring into existence; a breath, and they die. Well, Laura, have you considered Mr. Bien's proposal?"

"I have, and give the same answer—a decided negative."

"Do you dislike this man?"

"I neither like nor dislike him. He is kind and good, but I do not want to marry him or any one else. I am happy with you."

"Laura, I understand why you not only refused Mr. Bien, but that intelligent Mr. Daws some six months ago. You wish to dedicate your life to a brother whose affections have been

blighted. What a tender, fond, sympathetic outpouring of a sister's love," said Arthur Montmartre in a low voice and moistened eye.

"Am I not gay and happy? I am not very harsh in my temper, am I?" asked his sister, gazing lovingly into his face.

"Hush, dear, you are all softness and goodness. Your sacrifice is too great."

"Think, brother, what a heavenly mission I have, to work with you in the vineyard of the Lord!"

"Yes, dear, as we are Unitarians, and liberal ones at that, we administer charity irrespective of religious opinions, and so we find our time wholly occupied."

"And I can stay with you forever?"

"Until you like some one else better than me, Laura."

"That will never be," answered she quietly, but decidedly. "The self-abnegation is not so great as you imagine, because you so fully confide in me. Do I not have something to say about your sermons, am I not consulted about the most trivial things? I feel that I am appreciated, therefore contented and happy."

"With the rise of the morning sun, at noon, at evening's gloaming and at midnight I thank God for this love. Dear sister, your goodness spoils me. You do not let me have occasion to waft many sighs to the past."

"Well, Arthur," and Laura adroitly avoided drifting on a painful subject, "how are all of your flock in this cold weather, especially the

sick child who has been ill so long? Is there no hope?"

"No, none. I could not give the poor thing much comfort through religion. She is too young to comprehend it, yet she has a beautiful conception of heaven—marble streets, gold pavements, angels in silvery raiment, rare flowers, entrancing music. I should have remained until the end had she not sunk into unconsciousness, and the physician said that her spirit will gently take its flight and she will awake in a better world before the earth makes another revolution on its axis. What could I do to comfort the poor, distressed parents, but tell them of the goodness of God, and that their darling will be happier in that beautiful heaven she so vividly pictured, and repeat the words of the great Preacher, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, for such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

The Unitarian Church was a rather large, pretty Gothic building situated in an accessible part of the town, but sequestered from other dwellings. No other church in the city drew better audiences than this one, not that the sermons of the Rev. Mr. Montmartre were more eloquent than other divines, but because he practiced what he taught.

One morning, a cold but pleasant Sunday in March, with the snow on the ground, the church service commenced with that beautiful hymn, "The Lilies Toil Not, Neither Do They Spin," followed by a solemn prayer by the minister. He chose his text from the Proverbs of David,

chapter xxviii, verse 1: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what it may bring forth." The sun, the messenger of God's glory, proclaims to man that the day is here to struggle and to do. Man, the pride of creation, steps forth with a brave heart and smiling brow. He goes forth to work and to dare. He could thus far say of his work that success followed all his speculations. He stopped not to heed in his long, triumphant career the cry of humanity or the wailing of his own heart, which was not entirely satisfied with the mere acquisition of riches, rank and power, which feed only pride. To-day would see the completion of his mighty schemes of aggrandizement, to-morrow he would do that from which he would reap the 'golden opinions' of the people. They would applaud in thunder tones which would reach heaven, and then he would turn his thoughts to the Giver of these gifts. Again the sun with its thousand brilliant rays ushered in the day, the 'to-morrow' of yesterday. But where is the unfaltering hero of the day before? Where is he who, Jove-like, trod the earth with all the conscious dignity of God's impress upon him? What is the deed he had hoped and contemplated to do, at which mankind would hail him a benefactor with gratitude and joy. Go ask that ghostly corpse, with its livid hue and sealed eyes. That inanimate body is all that remains of the vainglorious man who deferred the work of to-day until to-morrow. Such is the product of many to-morrows. It is only the all-seeing One who can say an-

other day will be thus and thus. Do not defer good actions, commence this day. Let one moment conceive and the next, if possible, mature good plans. Put not your trust in others, but in yourself and God. Remember that Jesus said, 'Of mine own self I can do nothing; the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the work,' so pray God for strength that you may learn what to do and when to do it. If you have injured anyone do not procrastinate until to-morrow, for by that time the person or yourself may be summoned before the tribunal of God. Have you done wrong, prolong not the hours of repentance, but at once change your course of conduct. Flee from evil, pursue good. If you wish a garden of lovely exotics, you begin your work in season, weed out the thistles, cultivate the ground and foster them with tender care. Then why not commence to bestow more culture on deeds of charity, acts of kindness, humanity and love? They are the sweetest and most fragrant of all flowers, for they are destined to bloom in the garden of heaven. Have you prejudice in your heart against any nation, against any denomination, against any individual, cast it out at once and forever. Have you offended mother, father, sister, brother, friend or anyone, wait not to think and dream over it until to-morrow, but instantly make reparation. Do not think that you can knowingly commit a wrong and to-morrow bring offerings to propitiate God. No im-

molations of money, wine, oil or ~~incense~~ *incense* can atone for sin. It is only through repentance of the heart and benevolent labors that wrongs can

be expiated before God. The prophet Isaiah says, 'I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts? Incense is an abomination to me; bring me no more vain oblations. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow,' but boast not that you will do all this to-morrow; let it be done this day and by yourselves. God does not accept of vicarious atonement. God is a unity and with his ubiquitous spirit will judge each one singly; therefore let all unite and be one grand union of hearts throughout the world wherever civilization treads, to promote the harmony of religion, so all mankind will look upon one another as brothers and sisters walking in the same path, endeavoring to reach the same goal. Mighty emperors, powerful magnates, great and simple, and good-natured people have said what they will do to-morrow. One has visions of what his depotism can accomplish, another has vowed vengeance, the husbandman smiles at the fruits he will enjoy to-morrow. Arbitrary power may have fallen to freedom's cry, 'the first delight of human kind,' the fruit tree be blighted by to-morrow. Let us not allow the present to elude our grasp; only the passing moment is ours, we must improve and take advantage of it. Death, the inevitable doom of ~~all~~ living things, impends over man. It may come any moment; therefore be always prepared. I exhort you all to be considerate of one

another's infirmities of mind and body; be liberal towards the poor, tolerant in religious opinions, and be not hasty in condemning the actions of others. 'First cast the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote from thy brother's eye.'"

After dwelling at some length upon the necessity of immediate and concerted action for the relief of the indigent in their midst, the minister closed, saying: "May the Lord, the Father of all, fill with the divine grace of good-will and brotherly love the hearts not only of the members of my much-beloved congregation, but all, even 'the untutored savage who sees God in the winds.' May the Lord cause his face to shine upon you, be gracious unto you and give you the peace of upright minds, conscientious hearts and benevolent actions. May his blessings rest with you and accompany you to the celestial sphere. May God have you in His holy keeping. Amen."

Another hymn was sung to the grand, swelling notes of the organ, and the large assemblage was dismissed with the usual benediction.

"My friend," said the minister to a prepossessing young man who remained standing near one of the pillars absorbed in deep thought, "are you waiting to talk with me?"

"Do you not know me?" asked he, looking up into the clergyman's face.

"Is it you, Mr. Lavallo?" resumed Montmartre with a quivering voice.

"Yes, it is William Lavallo. I just strolled in here by accident. Your sermon has deeply affected me."

Without manifesting the trial it cost him and after mentally repeating, "Get thee behind me, Satan," Montmartre said aloud, "I am glad to see you, Mr. Lavalle. How long have you been in town?"

"I arrived yesterday."

"I cannot ask you how you like it, as you see everything under a white veil. Though the snow conceals many ugly spots, it nevertheless hides many garden plots which only require the warm breath of spring to render them beautiful. I hope your wife is well. I suppose the cold weather keeps her confined to her rooms."

Lavelle did not reply, turned deathly pale, put his hand to his heart and groaned aloud.

"Say not that she is dead!" returned the minister with visible emotion.

"She is worse than dead to me."

"You cannot, dare not, say that she was unfaithful, for the women of your race are generally true to their marital vows. And *she* of all women must be as good and pure as the snow that falls from heaven."

"Alas!" and Lavalle's anguish, restrained for a moment, rushed on like a torrent which the bursting dam had a moment before impeded. "I am one of the most miserable, wretched, unfortunate, and at the same time the most contemptible of men. One moment I feel that I should have killed Grace and atoned for my wounded honor; the next, remorse, that infernal agony and torture of the mind, tells me that I must be the victim of some foul conspiracy, some fearful delusion, and that I should have taken her to my

heart in defiance of ten thousand varnished falsehoods which threw ignominy upon her. An irresistible impulse, as potent as the attraction of gravitation, which draws all things to the center of the earth, has been and is drawing me westward and westward until I reach the fatal spot where she is, but for what purpose I cannot tell. Woe is me."

"Calm yourself. First of all let us go away from here, and then you can give an explanation." The minister drew his arm through his and led him forward.

Lavalle, compressing his passion and grief, accompanied him as unresistingly as a child. The congregation had passed out and the sexton, who had been impatiently waiting for the pastor's departure, now closed the door of the church.

Walking along with the clergyman, Lavalle poured forth the tale of Arnold, the jewels; nay, he did not forget to lacerate afresh his wounded heart. He tore off the coverings with no gentle hand, exposed his own temporary folly and cried, "The agony I endure I consider a retribution too terrible to bear."

"I tell you," replied Montmartre, "Grace must be innocent, and I clearly perceive she is. That Arnold is a villain."

"Do you think so?"

"I do, indeed; and time will clear up everything. Where did you go after leaving Grace?"

"I traveled in foreign climes, and made the effort to live for and by myself. But I discovered what Zimmerman wrote, 'That solitude is no

remedy for love, for it burns all the fiercer for having nothing to feed upon.'"

After luncheon the minister retired to his study. The Sunday afternoons were generally pleasantly spent. Unless to visit some one ill there were no parish duties to perform, and the inmates of the parsonage allowed themselves to spend their time according to their tastes. Occasionally sister and brother dined with some intimate friend or vice versa. If not, until time for the evening lecture they read and enjoyed all the innocent pleasure which is only to be derived from the knowledge of having satisfactorily performed one's work. And this laborer of the Lord earned his rest.

"Arthur, brother, may I come in?" said Laura, rapping at the door, entering as she continued: "I am afraid as I am unwell and you did not come to join me, something serious must have occurred to disturb the equilibrium of your brave spirit."

"I longed to be alone with no eye upon me but my Maker's. But, better so," said Montmartre to Laura as she started to go, "remain. Do you know who is here?"

"I am sure I cannot tell."

"Lavalle is here and the demon is tugging at my soul."

"Have you seen his wife?" asked Laura breathlessly.

"Listen. Ever since that sad farewell with Grace at Niagara, as you know, I have never seen or heard of her. My wound has had time

to cicatrize and I naturally thought that long ere this she was the wife of Lavallo, rolling in wealth and splendor, every tear drop kissed away. I had consoled myself with this pretty picture and hugged it to my heart. The cup that contained large drops of bitterness for me was filled with a sweet and delicious potion for her. And now this tableau is dissolved. She is not Lavallo's wife and he does not know what has become of her. She may or may not be in her old home," and Montmartre related to Laura all that Lavallo had unfolded to him.

"And no bird comes twittering from its leafy bower to tell us of her fate."

"I must fly to her. I must—what a violent ringing of the door bell!"

"Listen! Some one ill probably."

"A gentleman," said the maid, "has been thrown from his buggy and struck his head against the fence. He is stunned and seems badly hurt. A woman——"

"What, a man unconscious, a woman probably injured! Let me go and see."

"What a commotion! The man is insensible, have him taken into this bedroom," said Laura, who was at the scene of the disaster as quickly as her brother, and indicated with her finger a certain apartment.

"Very well, you look after the woman," rejoined Montmartre.

"Come," said Laura to the maid, "assist me to take her into the adjoining room. She must have fallen into the snow and slush and is prob-

ably more frightened than injured by the accident."

"She is warm."

"Where am I?" said the woman, opening her eyes.

"In good hands," responded Laura. "Here, put on this clean clothing and let me sponge your face."

The woman's black hair uncoiled itself like a snake and lay in heavy ringlets down her back. She was pale and haggard, but extremely beautiful. Upon inquiring for her husband and taken to the room she threw herself in speechless agony by the side of the unconscious man. Her eyes asked of the physician, who had just arrived a moment before, in dumb appeal what the lips refused to utter.

"Nay, madam," quietly replied the doctor to this look, "your husband may never recover consciousness; undoubtedly he will, but I fear he has received internal injuries which may prove fatal."

With a shriek the unhappy wife fell forward in a swoon and was quickly removed from the room.

In the meantime, after various remedies had been applied to the man, his respiration became stronger, he opened his eyes and sensibility crept into them. He gazed around, as if in search of some one, and the doctor hastily said: "Your wife is in the adjoining apartment, free from all injury excepting a little weakness from fright."

"And I?" inquired the man, in a scarcely audible whisper, and his eyes begged piteously for mercy—to live.

"Aid can only come from the heavenly Physician," returned the doctor sadly. "Think of your heavenly Father; your hours are numbered."

"My wife?" added the man with a groan as he closed his eyes.

"I shall see if she is strong enough to come in. The man into whose hands you have so fortunately fallen is a man of God with liberal ideas. Whatever your religion may be he will give you hope, and try and reconcile you to die and meet your God. I shall leave you to him."

The poor sufferer unclosed his eyes and found himself alone with the minister, who was mournfully looking down upon him, but a mild expression of hope beamed from his eye. "I tell you," said Montmartre, "whatever may be your faith, whether you are a Jew, Christian, Deist or so-called Infidel, there is mercy for you. God overlooks all faults and receives all into the kingdom of heaven who have acted in accordance with the dictates of their mind, heart and conscience. So, do not despair."

"Come closer," said the man in a feeble tone.

In a moment the minister was on his knees beside the bed, when Arnold continued: "I want to make a confession; get pencil and paper."

"I have them on hand in my pocket, but I am no priest, as you may undoubtedly see."

A ghastly smile passed over the sick man's face and he faintly responded, "I am of the Jewish religion. Write down what I tell you, then send for my wife, and for some one of my faith, if you know of any such person."

The minister murmured, "If you have been righteous God will receive you."

The dying man with gasps told him of acts of villainy which caused a lover to abandon his betrothed and was the death of her parents—suppressing only names—that the girl he had pursued had forsaken her religion and had become a nun to avoid his persecutions. "I subsequently married the woman who is with me," he moaned, "and have been infinitely wretched. We have led a kind of nomadic life. Though she has a violent temper, I have been much to blame for our mutual misery. In my remorse I gambled desperately so that my substance is utterly dissipated. My wife, my poor wife, will be left penniless. Ah, me!"

"As far as my power extends your wife shall be taken care of. Give me the name of the girl and her unfortunate intended. Who knows but what I may be the humble instrument of uniting them."

"Her name," he whispered, "is Grace Feld, her lover's William Lavallo. She lives in the town of D——, in Missouri; where he is I do not know; my name is Bernard Arnold. Seek them out and make amends."

At the mention of that beloved name the pencil dropped from Montmartre's hand, he bowed his head and involuntarily said: "That girl, I loved her, too!"

"You, too?" rejoined Arnold; but, exhausted from the recital, he closed his eyes in a half-fainting condition.

The minister raised his head and administered

a cordial, which somewhat revived him, and then guided his hand to sign the paper.

"I want to see my wife. Do you think God will forgive me?" inquired Arnold.

"God in His goodness is long-suffering and merciful. Repent, and I hope and pray He will forgive you."

The clergyman thrust the paper into his pocket. It was the second stab he had received that day."

"Oh, guilty me!" sighed Arnold.

"Yes," mentally exclaimed the minister, "Arnold can beat his breast and say *mea culpa*, but I have the *misérérê* in my heart. With Grace in a convent there is a sepulcher without any roses blooming over it."

As Mrs. Arnold entered the room she ran to her husband and threw her arms around him. They spoke and wept together.

"Do not excite your husband, Mrs. Arnold," added Montmartre as he proceeded to go where Laura was.

"Well, how is he?" asked his sister.

"Very low. He wants me to send for some one of his persuasion. This man, who is a—God forgive—he is a dying man."

"But what?"

"He wronged her, Grace, by telling falsehoods and separating her from Laval, and she is in a convent."

"The monster!"

"But I think it is right for me to send for Laval, so they can become reconciled to each other. I need not acquaint him with Arnold's

unprincipled and heartless actions. When he is dead it will be too late for retraction."

A messenger was accordingly dispatched and Lavalley quickly arrived.

"Do you know the name of this man?" inquired the latter of Montmartre.

"His name is Arnold. He is married, but not to Grace," answered he as Lavalley turned deathly pale.

"Though I feel that Arnold has been, must have been, a false man, still all such thoughts must give way before the death-bed of a co-religionist."

"Right, my friend."

"Yes, though I despise him, yet I feel sadly for him in this solemn hour. I am now ready to go in, pray and say those words, without which no one of the Jewish faith is satisfied to have his soul ushered into eternity."

"There is the room. Go right in. I shall remain here," said the minister with instinctive delicacy.

"Hear, O Israel," said Lavalley as he reached the bedside of the man.

A faint glimmer of a smile passed over Arnold's face.

"Yes," continued Lavalley, "live, act and think as we will, when it comes to death we generally return to the allegiance of God. Wavering, trembling, tottering in faith, disclaiming, nullifying and abolishing customs, our belief comes back with full vigor and force when the life of futurity is dimly outlined before our receding vision."

Mrs. Arnold was so absorbed in her grief that she had not raised her head from the bed at Laval's entrance. But when he spoke and prayed for the dying man in a low voice, her frame shook with a convulsive tremor. Laval thought it was the agitation of grief alone. When all was still and she knew that her husband's spirit had gone to its eternal home, she clasped her arms more firmly around him and buried her face more deeply in the blankets.

Laval had not yet seen her face, and was strangely moved at the intense grief of this man's wife. "Villain he was," mused he, "but let me not judge him; he has now appeared before the tribunal of the infallible Judge. I wish that I had seen him sooner; he would probably have revealed some dark transaction on his part and throw light on the diamonds. But, thank God, Grace did not marry him. Who knows what the result will be?"

"Is it all over?" asked Montmartre as Laval entered the room where he and his sister were sitting.

"Yes, I left the poor woman overwhelmed with grief. I did not see her face. I made no attempt to console, as I think no words of mine, at this bitter time, can soften her grief. Miss Montmartre, I beg your pardon, I did not see you. Alas! that we should meet under such sad circumstances."

"Time brings thorns as well as roses," said Laura shaking hands and going quietly into the other room and removing the wife's fingers from the dead and leading her into another apart-

ment. As Mrs. Arnold passed with her head bowed, Lavalley, who was going into the room, caught a glimpse of her face and exclaimed in a low voice:

"Great heaven! it is Letitia."

"Laura," said Dr. Montmartre, when alone with his sister, "that Mrs. Arnold is Letitia of whom Lavalley spoke in his morning's confession."

"Poor man, he is to be pitied."

"True, sister. But think how wicked I have been. While Lavalley was with the dying Arnold, I was dreaming of Grace. All kinds of fantastic visions came floating through my brain. I shudder at my own weakness in having allowed such wild thoughts to enter, and I repeat, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' I must see Lavalley as soon as this funeral is over and give him the confession I took from the dying man."

"Thank God you have suppressed all rebellious thoughts."

"Amen, say I, though it is bitter to reflect, 'it might have been.' But, Laura, woe to the person who allows his meditations to run riot, thinking to restrain them when so inclined. Ideas and fancies which can be easily repressed at their conception, become irrepressible when indulged in. I have dashed away those seductive thoughts and grieve for Lavalley. I submit to everything, yet a cry of despair goes up from my heart to God, to think that the young girl I so tenderly love is enclosed within those walls. How desolate must that tortured heart have been, how deep and dark her distress, to take that lonely step—that fatal plunge. How will Lavalley hear the

avowal of Arnold's wickedness and infernal plot?"

"Who can tell? As for Grace, she was as easily moved as the pendulum of a clock."

"Dear sister, hundreds of people are daily precipitated into the committal of actions which are totally foreign to their natures."

"Then why do they act so?"

"Because circumstances twist and force them. A simple and perfect reliance in God, a mind clear and free from all cobwebs of superstition, constant appeals to judgment and reason, spotless integrity, large charity and sympathy for all, are the main safeguards against errors and transgressions."

CHAPTER XL.

"Shall I avoid Mrs. Arnold?" said Lavallo to Montmartre.

"No, I should not. There is no necessity, is there?"

"Have you no faith in me? If she were to stand before me in all the radiance of her maiden beauty, nay, with increased Circean wiles, she would make no impression upon me now. She, with her corpse—I, with my blighted hopes."

"Faugh!" exclaimed the minister, "how our delicate and sensitive natures recoil from the dead, the instinct of nature! It matters not how we live or how refined our habits, though our food were as sweet scented as violets, our drink distilled dew, though we sipped the nectar and ambrosia of the Gods or fed on the coarsest fare, we shall be the same tempting morsels for worms."

"True, true. I think it would be better to have the corpse of Arnold removed."

"I will not consent to it. Let the funeral take place from the parsonage."

"I shall have to send, then, for some of the fraternity and have the rites performed according to the dead man's religion."

"Do so. There is even a change in burying people now."

"Yes, the orthodox Jews of former times placed the coffin on the floor, the shrouds were all uniformly made, no flowers were strewn on the coffin and none planted in the cemeteries. No marble column towering to the sky, with iron railing surrounding the plot of many colored blossoms, marked the rich man's grave. These customs indicated that after death all are equal."

"So now those severe and levelling simplicities are discarded, are they?"

"Yes, except in ultra orthodox communities. To-day the Jewish cemeteries bloom as the rose, and a beautiful custom it is; thus death loses half of its terror. Flowers are such a beautiful tribute to the living and the dead, for they are sweet and pure as the dew-drops from heaven. In the city of the dead the flowers, with their fragrance and nodding corrolas, say: 'I die every year and live again in undiminished beauty.' So mortals die, only to live over again a more beautiful life."

When Mrs. Arnold saw her husband in his coffin, in a white linen shroud, with tapers burning on each side of him, her composure again deserted her and she wept freely. She kissed his cold brow; it thrilled her like an electric shock. Her love for her aunt and uncle was not great, therefore it was the first time that her lips came in contact with lifeless flesh.

The lid was screwed down and the weeping widow fell upon Laura's neck for sympathy. Through the liberality of Lavalie, the coffin was

profusely decked with wreaths and bouquets of tube-roses and white jasmine.

Montmartre, with a dignitary of the synagogue, also accompanied the hearse. Arrived at the Jewish cemetery, Arnold was buried in conformity with his faith, and the ceremony closed with the words, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away." The Unitarian minister simply said, "Dust thou art; into dust thou shalt return." In a few moments the shovels were at work throwing the clods of earth upon the coffin, sending back hollow and reverberating sounds.

"You must not go back to the hotel, Mrs. Arnold," remonstrated Laura after the funeral. "Our quiet home is better for you now than to go there and be subjected to the gaze of so many strangers. You must abide with us until you go to your parents." And, weary and heartsick, Mrs. Arnold yielded to her kind and considerate solicitations.

"Jesus says," added Laura, "'not one sparrow shall fall unheeded to the ground, and are ye not more than sparrows?' In this room some little robins come pecking at the window-sills to receive their crumbs of bread which I daily give them. They will teach you that God will not forget you. Here, untrammelled, you can perform any service your religion requires."

"How good and liberal minded you are."

"My belief teaches me that each individual should do as his or her conscience dictates in matters of religion. The thoughts of my brother and myself run in the same current with an eminent divine, who remarked 'Ever be ready to listen to

what any honest man has said, for no human mind has ever seen the whole truth,' so we never interfere with any person's honest religion."

Mrs. Arnold sat in her room in her black dress, mourning for her dead. She had grown much older and the inroads on her beauty had been deeper than a short term of wedded life should cause. Dark purple rings were under her eyes, which had lost much of their vivacious sparkle, with which she had enthralled the imagination of men; neither were her lips as tempting as before. Notwithstanding these changes she was still lovely. Her beauty was softer and somewhat refined through suffering, and struck more favorably upon the attentive observer.

"Well, dear," said Laura as Mrs. Arnold's fingers toyed with the Bible, "what have you been reading?"

"The Book of Job."

"It is a beautiful legend, and his resignation under such manifold afflictions should reconcile you to the inevitable. His unbounded faith in God, as he says, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' manifests the sublimity of his soul. Why not try to imitate him?"

"I have no energy for anything, Miss Montmartre. Your brother and Mr. Lavalley have been in to see me to-day. Your brother read to me some of those truths which have comforted man for ages. I can never repay his goodness or yours, either."

"We have done nothing, Mr. Lavalley——"

"Pray forgive me for interrupting you, but I know under what a heavy debt of obligation I

am to him. He has acted very delicately and generously towards me. Your kindness engenders confidence. You know the history of my husband and may as well know mine. Shall I give you a leaf of it?"

"If it is not too painful to you."

"Never mind the pain, I must endure it. Only I beg you to be lenient in your judgment."

"I try my best never to be harsh."

"I deceived my cousin," pursued the widow in a low voice and with downcast eyes. "I endeavored to tear Lavallo from her, but do not forget, Grace was an only child and rich. I, one of many and poor. I knew nothing of Arnold having the jewels until after I married him, and then I could not and would not wear one of them."

"That was a good trait," broke in Laura.

"I did not find happiness in my married life. Mr. Arnold was a loving and devoted husband for a few months, then he grew weary of me, and innumerable storms arose on the domestic horizon. What was wanting I could not tell."

"Deep conjugal affection; the diamond of married life was not there."

"It was on my part, I assure you. My husband gave unbridled license to his passions, gambled heavily, drank deeply and indulged in all the accompanying evils that the sisters of sin and misery bring in their train. His eloquence forsook him. Many a time his trembling limbs and violent gestures were evident suggestions that they were induced by other emotions than those of his

thesis. His audiences grew thin; he grew sullen and saturnine."

"You should have attempted to bring him back into the right path."

"He left me alone at the hotel for days. If I murmured he cursed me, if I were silent he upbraided me. I could not reform him," continued Mrs. Arnold mournfully.

"You must have been very unhappy."

"You may well say so, my dear Miss Montmartre, when I tell you love flourished on such a soil. Alas! for the inconsistency of human nature, but it was so. 'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true.' I loved him better than anyone else in the world and I would have sacrificed myself to any visible or invisible demon who could have procured me his sincere and permanent affection. Finally I grew pale, haggard and enervated; murmured and became cross and irritable. Letters from home were not encouraging; business was dull, mother and children were sick."

"In your low spirits these letters must have stirred up a keen aching for home."

"And a longing for my mother, though I never told my husband. When he informed me that his purse was low by the excessive drains upon it—the jewelry had all been disposed of and the proceeds swallowed up the first year—and that he would have to turn his face from 'the critical East' I thanked God. One day when he was in a cheerful mood he told me I should go with him to see my parents, then to St. Louis or Chi-

cago, and from there start to California, the Mecca of the United States."

"And you proceeded thus far on your journey when that fatal accident occurred, eh?"

"Yes," returned Mrs. Arnold weeping, "we arrived too late on Saturday for him to make arrangements to lecture. He was fond of driving and took a team Sunday with the very last piece of coin he had. He was so kind that day that I fondly hoped a return of those sweet, halcyon days following our marriage."

"God knows best," softly murmured Laura.

"I hope you will not think me an undutiful widow for divulging so much of my experience with him. I feel relieved by imparting it to you. I would not tell a word to my parents or to any other living being but you for untold wealth. I can trust you, can I not?"

"As if it were locked in your own mind."

"And you do not consider me utterly bad?"

"I do not. You have acted wrong towards your cousin, very wrong. Let your future goodness atone for it."

"I vowed mentally beside my dead husband to make amends as far as possible. And has not God punished me?" said Mrs. Arnold excitedly.

"Calm yourself. Lie down and take a rest. Remember, sincere repentance for the fault you have committed will obtain forgiveness of our merciful Father."

Mrs. Arnold had not told Laura how in those long, dreary hours of night—watching, waiting and heart-ache for her husband, her mind, left to itself, would unravel the threads spun around

the years of her existence, and as it unwound her past life lay before her. She had long been accustomed to craftiness, but she grew timorous and was afraid of the voices which clamored around her.

We all have voices gentle or clamorous as good or evil predominates within us.

Mrs. Arnold's faults shone clearer and clearer as each one filed by in rapid succession, and the end of the panorama would be, Grace on her knees in the convent cell. Of course with the return of Arnold or of the rising sun her fears were dispelled, and she laughed at her nervousness and trepidation of the night, declaring she would never more give way to such absurd fancies of the brain. But with watching, suspense and loss of sleep the same voices would call and the same frightful visions would reappear with increased power. These semaphores of an awakening conscience will assert themselves to the guilty and, like Banquo's ghost, "Will not down."

CHAPTER XLI.

"Laura," said Montmartre, "I am placed in a painful position to be compelled to inform Lavalie about Grace."

"But you suffer from the same cause, Arthur. Like all powerful and noble natures, you are not thinking of the arrow in your own heart, but of the one that must pierce your friends."

"From the moment of Lavalie's voluntary confession I conceived a strong friendship for him; now that the battle with my temptation is over, it daily increases."

"The only way, dear brother, to extricate yourself from an unpleasant duty is to execute it quickly."

"You are right. I have been occupied a few days with Arnold's funeral, and the confusion attendant upon it prevented me. Every moment seems a century until I have it off my mind."

"Why did you not tell him to-day?"

"I was disturbed and he was restless and did not remain long, but the next time he comes I must see to it."

The following day when Lavalie called he was ushered into the minister's study as the latter had directed. After the customary salu-

tations, Lavalle inadvertently commenced on the theme which the minister most earnestly desired and over which he had puzzled his brain all morning how to introduce.

"I must soon be moving; the impulse is strong upon me, and, dear friend, I must follow it. I have no peace. Would you believe it, last night I heard Grace calling me to come and see her once more. I made a memorandum of the date. I would like to ask Mrs. Arnold about her, but have not the courage. I must go, though, as the voice tells me I must do so without delay." Lavalle talked to Dr. Montmartre on this subject without reserve and without blushing.

"Man, you are overtaken. You have recently gone through a severe ordeal. The sight of Mrs. Arnold has only vividly recalled the past, and you have allowed your mind to dwell constantly upon it. "No," continued the minister, very sadly, "Grace does not call you."

"Well, well, sir, I tell you, the fire was blazing brightly in my room and I was smoking a cigar. I had not been thinking of any particular thing, but was allowing my thoughts to run at random, when finally a picture of Grace rose before me. It appeared as if she were in the deepest dejection. I said to myself, as if awakening from a dream, 'Ho! man, no weak fancies, no overheated brain.' I went to the window and opened it. The piercing wind dashed a chill over me and extinguished the fire of my imagination. I closed the window, reseated myself before the table, intending to write a

business letter which I had neglected, fully determined to banish all conjuring phantoms. I had no sooner commenced to write than I heard my name called twice in a very low, quavering tone, but with a distinct articulation. It was her voice," and Lavalley's face flushed with excitement.

"Friend, brother, I may say, as we are all children of one Father, I feel nearer to you than you imagine. Still, I must wound you by telling you something which Arnold confessed to me on his death-bed, since which time I have neither had the opportunity nor the courage to speak to you of it. Shall I tell you or will you read this paper?"

"Proceed, but give me the paper; I shall keep it. Undoubtedly it concerns Grace."

"It does." Then the minister narrated what Arnold had told him; how he had loved Grace, how she declined, then scorned his renewed proposal, and that in his desire for revenge he inveigled her reckless father to gamble with him, drew him into his clutches, and thereupon demanded her hand or the money. That, to save her father, and at his command, she hypothesized the jewels, the possession of which Arnold obtained by some chicanery.

"Hold!" said Lavalley, as the clergyman was about to proceed. "Say no more. I suffocate with remorse. I wish I could fly to her; rail and steam are too slow. Oh, good and pure angel, I did not know you were made of such strong fiber as to relinquish all on the altar of parental affection. Thou wast the sacrifice, but

for thee, poor girl, there was no substitute sent to save. Dear friend, I must bid you good-bye. I am off to my darling."

"Come back, rash and impetuous young man. My heart bleeds for you, but I have not yet finished. You must remember," and the poor minister spoke distinctly and bravely, "her action was a sin in the eye of God and man. Deception, though committed from the purest of motives, is yet not acceptable unto God. Had her course been upright, you would not have deserted her, but might have been induced to assist her father. But as it was, he, afterwards, in a moment of remorse, shame and agony, committed suicide. The mother, having had heart-disease, succumbed to the fatal malady, her death being accelerated by the event and——"

"Stay. Condemn her not. Her parents dead too! I thank God you have never loved her as I do. As long as she was only obedient, you must not call the most unselfish offering—sin. I am breathless to take her to my arms and cherish her all the more kindly for having passed through such harrowing trials. Poor wounded dove."

The minister wiped the perspiration of agony from his brow. God knows how he had loved her, and, *misery*, he loved her still; but it was absolute torture to be compelled to inform Lavalley that Grace was irrevocably lost to him. He felt his courage exuding through his fingers at those cruel, deadly words that must be spoken.

"Lavalle," and the minister's heart was in his voice, "you do not give me time to finish what I began to tell you. You must listen and be patient. Be strong and show what you can endure. You are a man; crush the pain and wear a smile upon your lips. Grace, bereft of parents, was persecuted by Arnold. He renewed his suit and increased his attentions, even forged her father's hand to a letter urging her to become his wife; to escape she took refuge in a convent, turned Catholic and is now a nun." He brought out the words with a spasmodic quickness, which denoted the pain he was undergoing, but they had done their work.

Had a fabled thunderbolt fallen upon Lavalle his spirit could not have been more crushed. He jumped up, held out his hands in a blind, staggering way, and said: "Great God, spare me this last bitter stroke. I, who should have been there with her, far away; she, poor creature, harassed with trouble, all alone. I awaken from my delirium to discover that she is innocent and was faithful. Now as I am ready to rush to her, I am hurled back from my bliss with such powerful hands. Sacrificed to a convent life! I cannot bear it. Why did you not say she was dead and buried; then I might have consoled myself planting flowers over her grave and bedewing them with tears until God in His mercy would have taken me. Would that I could tear Arnold from his grave, give him life, cut out his palpitating heart and give it to the dogs. That girl living but dead to me! Great heaven, I shall do something desperate.



"I, who should have been there with her, far away!"



"I shall go mad." He threw himself into a chair and wept burning but useless tears, though they relieved the choking sensation in his throat.

The minister did not reply, giving time for the storm and fury of Laval's passion to have full sway and exhaust themselves.

As Laval had despaired and wept, now he cursed and raved. "Curse Arnold; may his soul be in the deepest pit of perdition, may it rest in hell, may his thirst be eternal and, like Tantalus, may the cool, fresh water be placed to his lips, but may he never be able to quench his thirst; may flaming fire and molten lead be poured down his throat. Gracious God, why hast thou cursed me? I would that I had never been born."

"Blaspheme not. Forgive as you wish to be forgiven. Remember that Arnold has gone before a higher court. 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord; I will repay.' You were permitted to smooth Arnold's dying pillow and say words of heavenly consolation. 'Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.' When that terrible curse——"

"Oh, it is well for you to clothe yourself in an armor of Biblical proverbs, as she could never be yours. You consign her with resignation to the convent, but, as for me, I must give up the warm, loving presence, accept memory and feed on that bitter 'it might have been.' You have long lived on the past, but my love was sown in the soil of happiness, matured by affection's tears and smiles, grown to be wheat

ready for the gleaner; the bread is taken from my hungry mouth and now you bid me eat your dry aphorisms!"

"Mr. Lavallo," and the minister's voice was touching in its pathos of wounded dignity, "you know not what you say. God knows how I have schooled my feelings to be able to think that you should possess and wear the priceless jewel. Though my words may grate harshly on your ear, my heart went out to you when I thought of the excruciating pain this information would give you. Your accusation is unjust. I have learned to endure much for my Master's sake. I shall lay my heart bare to you. I loved Grace; I do love her still; but it is now with the love of a devoted brother. As she loves you, I only wish I could place her in your arms."

"Nay, do not mind me. You have been much tried, but you have seen and sympathized so much with the affliction of others, that you forget to think of yourself. Here am I, a worthless fellow, living only to gratify myself. Going along heretofore in a garden of flowers, gathering many, throwing them away ere they had time to lose their freshness, for I plucked them without perfume; I, who could have taken the rarest and most exquisite exotic to my bosom, stooped to cull this most lovely wild-rose, whose fragrance exceeded them all. In a moment of temporary insanity I threw it away. Now, when I would have taken it back, treasured and guarded it with my life, it is taken in the darkness to die—no

sun and no dew will fall on it there to keep it fresh. Oh, Grace, Grace! you might have made a good man out of me. I form good resolutions often enough, but never have steadiness of purpose to accomplish anything. Now I shall become reckless and dissipated. God only knows how my career will terminate."

"Maimonides translates from the Talmud that 'The golden ladder consists of eight steps,' and as you give liberally when appealed to you would, according to that book, be on the third round or step; who knows but with a little more exertion you may climb the other five; I believe you a really good, generous fellow, and not nearly so black as you paint yourself."

"Yes, I am black. I have never done unsolicited by word or action a good deed. If any one requested anything of me, and many did, I never refused; but at no time did I ever take the trouble to ascertain whether it was thrown away on an impostor, or if any more were required. After that faux-pas with Letitia I was going to turn over a new leaf, but did not. So Grace is taken from me; I am miserable; let others feel so too."

"'Deus major columna.' Prayer and charitable deeds will aid you to be resigned."

"I must see Grace. I cannot live without seeing her once more," and Lavalley's face flamed with excitement.

"Calm yourself; you will not be allowed to see her."

"I shall scale the walls; I shall scatter bolts and bars," replied Lavalley, greatly agitated.

"Come, come, lay aside such absurd notions. Think of it; Grace has entered the convent of her own free will. No doubt she has been happier there than if she had remained in the world and been persecuted by Arnold."

"I do not blame the nuns for adding that pure creature to their number, but I want her. I shall go and see her aunt. I must do something. I cannot repress the violent longing of my soul, which prompts me to take vengeance on some one."

"*'Cernit omnia Deus vindex.'* He will not forget to punish the guilty in His own way. On whom would you now take vengeance?"

"If I cannot hold any one accountable, retribution shall fall on me," and Lavalley glared around savagely.

"Come," rejoined the minister, anxious to divert his mind. "What is to be done with Mrs. Arnold? Her parents telegraphed her yesterday to come home, but she appeared so embarrassed that I do not believe she has sufficient funds to take her there without disposing of some trinkets or valuables, even if she has any."

"That miserable woman must have jewels, wrung from my innocent one with tears of blood."

"That woman is not responsible for her husband's actions."

"But you will admit, my friend, that she should answer for her own."

"Mr. Lavalley, if persons would not forget what temptations they lay out or are too weak

to resist, they would not be so ready to condemn. They would hold themselves more amenable for their own acts and there would be fewer faults committed. We are too ready to say, with Adam, 'The woman ate the apple and did bid me eat.'"

"Here is money," and Lavalley laid down a purse filled with gold. "I would not have it said that I deny any one in need, especially a co-religionist."

"Now you are good and generous, not 'worthless,' as long as your money is applied to doing good; but, my dear Lavalley, I hope the day will come when all will be eager to assist one of another denomination as of their own. Your people stand first of all others in liberality, not only to your own poor, but to the poor of the world. Charity is a command of Judaism, I know, and it is well and faithfully observed. Any religion with alms-giving as one of the principal precepts has much to recommend it. The Mohammedan, in which charity forms the most important part of its code, cannot be utterly bad. Charity accomplishes a great design of our Creator, viz.: sympathy for our fellow creatures."

"Do not let me see that woman again," said Lavalley, who had not heard a word of what the minister had said. "It maddens me to think of my folly; that I turned from the gold to the dross. I want the gold now."

"I cannot argue with you to-day. You are in the condition of a child who has seen the sun sinking behind the western edge of the

horizon, and while basking in his rays has not fully enjoyed them. But no sooner has the glorious orb of day departed and it feels the chilling dew of night than it cries for the golden ball to come back again; it is so pretty to look at, so warm, so life-giving. No tears bring back the sun until the appointed time, neither do they avail nor rectify past misdeeds. The past does not belong to us any more. It is because nature's laws are inexorable, immutable and undying that we look up with mysterious awe and love to the great Architect of the universe."

As Lavalley rose to go, the minister kindly remonstrated with him, but he broke out impetuously: "I tell you I am no longer answerable for myself. I am deserted by God and man. I cannot help it if my soul cries out, Murder!"

The minister drew back in horror and pity, saying: "Neither God nor man has deserted you. Pray——"

"Have I not prayed to God, passionately, fervently, what more can I do?"

"Prayer will do you good, my friend, for it is an infallible tonic for a distressed heart, but it is not efficacious in altering the Divine will. Neither prayers, tears, entreaties, expostulations, nor good intentions can affect this; and it is well that it is not so, for God alone errs not in His acts. Let us therefore humble our hearts to Him who in His wisdom and goodness provides for our wants before we are created. Though we are often inclined to rebellion, we know not the issue of events, and by pa-

tiently waiting we may rejoice ultimately at those very occurrences which we before lamented."

"If I could only see her!"

"Grace can be no more to you than if she were dead and buried. I cannot feed you on false hopes. There is no alternative for you but to bow your head in submission to the Divine will and console yourself with those words and maxims which are now as dry to you as desert sands."

"I am too stiff-necked. I am——"

"Listen to me before you say something irreverent. I shall do for you what I would do for few, to show that God is ever nigh. In your extremity of passionate despair He has raised you up a friend who will remain with you day and night until your grief is assuaged and you can say: 'Leave me; I am strong enough. I can walk alone. God has girded me with strength. Thy will be done.' Last summer the members of my congregation were desirous of my taking a few weeks' vacation from my labors of love, but I refused. Though they may demur at my going for such a length of time and will miss me—no more than I shall them—they will not refuse me. I think I shall travel with you and show you the misery and destitution of the world. Admitting you cannot find the happiness your soul craves for in love, yet you may find peace in administering to the wants of others. This idea has come upon me like a flash and I have acted upon it without a moment's hesitation."

"Will you first go to D——, and endeavor to see Grace? Promise; then I shall have something to live for," and the clergyman solemnly promised.

The minister desired to rescue Lavalle from his worst enemy, himself. It was a precious thing to this servant of God to save another mortal soul, and it was a more savory offering unto the Lord than ten thousand converts.

"Laura," said her brother, after Lavalle's departure, "to save our friend, who cannot yet reconcile himself to the loss of Grace, I intend to travel with him and attempt to see her. I feel sure you will accompany us," and as she nodded in the affirmative, he continued: "I apprehend the mission will be a sad one. Though Mrs. Arnold is anxious to start, I think she had better wait and go with us. You can advise her in a delicate way not to intrude upon Lavalle, as his despair is so great."

"Leave that to me," replied Laura briskly.

A few days afterwards the Rev. Dr. Montmartre secured his leave of absence, and with Laura, Lavalle and Mrs. Arnold departed for D——. Lavalle remained in the smoking car or lounged on the platform with the minister. On the near approach to D—— he shut himself up in his drawing-room, wrapped in his own gloomy thoughts, conjuring what dire vengeance he would have taken upon Arnold if he had not escaped his grasp.

CHAPTER XLII.

"Amelia, have I not waited long enough? The term of probation has expired some months ago, still you hesitate to appoint the day. My heart grows sick with hope deferred," said Everard.

"Mark, you know father's health is delicate."

"Why need that interfere with our marriage?"

"I cannot leave him; even my great love for you will not cause me to do that."

"Is it possible, dear, that you have known me this long time and still do not understand me? You are everything to your father and shall remain so."

"Are you satisfied that I divide my attention? Reflect well. Father is half-paralyzed again; sickness has made him irritable. As long as he lives I wish to administer to his wants; he would resent it as deep ingratitude if he were intrusted to servants, and I feel that I am better adapted to attend to him than Alice."

"Indeed you are, my precious Amelia, and I more so than Charlie. We are both more serious. So, darling, come; no more scruples. I shall be as devoted to Mr. Hill as if I were his actual son. Is he not the father of my transcendent Amelia—the ne plus ultra of all that is good?"

"Ah! flatterer, what else have you to say?"

"That we get married without delay! How about the performance of the marriage ceremony?" continued Everard, falteringly.

"We must first procure a license, I suppose," returned Amelia provokingly.

"That is easily enough obtained. I suppose we shall have to be twice married, by the minister and by the rabbi. We shall be securely bound, Amelia."

"A rabbi?" returned she, panting. "I have never seen one. I am frightened."

"If the idea makes you nervous, dear, let it be by the minister only, or, better still, by the Justice of the Peace. Any one authorized to solemnize the sacred rite will answer as well. In becoming my wife, Amelia, I want nothing connected with my religion that is repugnant to you. Have it as you will."

"Dear Mark, let the marriage be a compromise, and let us have our mutual friend, Judge Evans, perform the ceremony."

"So be it. And now, as that momentous question is settled, do you not think your father will be able to dispense with your care for a few months? You can trust Alice that length of time."

"Indeed we can. She is one of the best and most attentive of nurses and is more than willing," rejoined Amelia, blushing. "And when we come back we shall live in the old homestead with father."

"Yes, precious, you will have to accept me as a permanent boarder then. If your father

becomes strong and you are willing, we may move to St. Louis, as the field is larger there, though I am coining money here, so to speak."

"Yes, dear Mark, you are a famous man already. You are called in criminal cases far and wide. Do not go away from here. I love the old place, with its dear, old associations. As for father, it would be snapping a part of his life if he were taken away from mother's grave."

"Say no more. Until you say, 'Mark, let us seek new faces,' I shall not mention it."

"And, Mark," responded she, with tears in her eyes, "when we are married you must strike out politically and have your seat as a Judge."

"My Amelia is ambitious. Your suggestion, jewel, has given instantaneous conception to noble aspirations. If I live, please God, you shall be the wife of a Judge."

"It is not for my elevation I care, but for yours. Father has powerful and influential friends, even Charlie can boast of a host of them; so there is a fine prospect for my candidate."

"What an admirable politician you are. But you have not calculated that your friends may desert you after marriage."

"They will not when they come to know what a noble man you are."

"Now I can repeat your word 'flatterer.' Let us be united and start immediately on our tour. May the great Father of all grant that our mar-

riage have a rosy ending," and Everard sealed the words with a kiss.

Several days after this conversation their marriage was announced in the papers, and when Berkhoff read it, he rushed home like one demented. "Rebecca," cried he, "just guess what has happened?"

"For heaven's sake, tell me right off; from your looks it must be something terrible."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Mrs. Silverbaum; "has your store burned up and no insurance?"

"Everard has married Amelia Hill and gone traveling!"

"Is that all?" asked Mrs. Berkhoff, with a sigh of relief. "Have you not long expected it?"

"Yes, but I prayed that it wouldn't come to pass. The man is blind, blind."

"Oh, he will never be happy."

"There is no telling, he may be," said Rebecca.

"How can he be, Rebecca? If you work for one thing and I for another can that bring happiness? It is all very well now, but if the future should bring children, they will hear different ideas about God and about this and that, and it will end by believing in nothing and possibly in a divorce. Everard, Everard, what have you done?"

"Come, never mind, Berkhoff; if Mr. Everard is satisfied, I see no reason why you should not be."

"Rebecca, my wife," said Berkhoff mournfully.

"Rebecca, my daughter," screamed the mother.

"Well, can you alter it? If I had been Mr. Everard I would not have married her, but as he did, he must take the consequences. Must we worry ourselves to death over it?"

"Bad times," returned Mrs. Silverbaum.

"I should think so," continued Mr. Berkhoff. "See what has happened in this miserable town—it could only happen here too—Grace Feld a nun and now this."

"I am sorry for Grace Feld," said Mrs. Berkhoff, "for I think and know that trouble drove her there. Mercy, how I shudder when I think of her! I should go mad there."

"Indeed, my sunflower, you would die in that place. But as you will never be there, it is no use to trouble over things which will never happen."

"If Grace Feld had been happily married, poor thing, as I am, the cloister would have been an impossibility too. What an unfortunate family! Mrs. Rheinberg feels wretched over the dispatch she received yesterday of the death of Mr. Arnold. I am sorry, though I dislike Mrs. Arnold; she was always proud, insolent and crafty. She thought she could conquer the world with her beauty."

"Well, my dear, we all have faults, though you are nearer perfection than any one I know of."

"Good," said Mrs. Berkhoff, candidly, "I like praise. Mr. Everard has many faults; he

forgot to invite his old friends. Ashamed of us perhaps."

"But the poor fellow knows I should have felt too bad to come, that's the reason. He is too good to be ashamed of any one."

"Ah! You possess such a good heart. You judge every one by yourself. I know you, you dear; you are ashamed of people only when they do wrong, and for your sake I shall judge him leniently."

"Berkhoff is a gold mine," said Mrs. Silverbaum, affectionately patting her son-in-law on the shoulder.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Nearly two dreary years had passed away since Grace had been received as a novice in the convent. She was now known by the name of Sister Catharine, and in a few days was to take the vows which would confirm her perpetual marriage to Christ. She had not grown very strong since her severe illness. Lack of exercise in the open air, close application to religious reading and minute devotion to duties all combined to tell on the young sister, who, like a plant in the dark, could not thrive without the enlivening rays of the sun. Her forehead, white as Carrara marble, from much thought had slight contractions; her cheeks had lost their delicate bloom and their plumpness; her eyes, bluer than ever, though sunken in their sockets, appeared like two cerulean lakes, deep and unfathomable. She was thin to emaciation, for by many fasts she had deprived herself of much necessary nourishment. Her lips and hands were tremulous with nervous excitement. With the zeal of the apostate she was not content in performing the devotions and penances required. She was utterly miserable and despondent when not engaged in religious exercises. It was no longer for peace, which at first had drawn her—the refugee from persecution—into Catholicism, but because she

was infatuated with the very religion itself. The now zealous nun would have fain exercised the same power over all those with whom she came in contact.

"Sister Louise," said Sister Benedicta, "I am afraid Sister Catharine will make herself ill; she is so very rigid in observing everything, even more than is necessary."

"I am afraid of the same thing. Her confessor remonstrates with her over and over again for carrying her devotions and self-inflicted punishments to such an extreme. Expostulations are of no avail whatever. Whenever I say anything to her about being over-zealous, she invariably answers by reciting an example of some of the martyrs in the catalogues of saints, and reminds me of how many steps she has yet to climb ere she can reach the ideal of human perfection and sanctity. Thus every word of condemnation only adds fresh fuel to the flames."

"I have never seen such a good, holy person. Just as soon as a scholar comes into the building who is not in the fold she immediately begs permission of Mother Superior and of her confessor to exorcise the evil that she thinks must necessarily exist in such a being and bring her under the guidance of our holy church. When the new Protestant boarder came the other day, I heard her say to Mother Therese, her fine, blue eyes swimming in tears, 'Culpa mea, culpa mea, I must rescue that sinking soul and save my own.'"

"God bless her," rejoined Sister Louise fer-

vently; "her face is ever welcome in the infirmary; there is no better nurse, for she never grows weary. No word of complaint ever escapes her lips. She says her rosary repeatedly, even while in attendance on the sick, and clings to the cross with the fervor of an Anastasia. She is courteous and kind to the rich boarders, affectionate and solicitous respecting the poor ones. They all look up to her as their protectress."

"But, my dear, she has taken you as her model."

"Indeed, she is ever so much better than I am. I am proud of my pupil, but she has outstripped her instructress."

"Your religion, Sister Louise, is a good one because it is healthy. A well-nourished body produces a strong mind. Your step is elastic, your eyes beam with a bright but mild radiance; you do not shut out happy thoughts or God's blessed sunshine. You will never see any visions or be disturbed by harps, angels and stairways suspended in the heaven."

"No, I am not good enough to attain to such a height."

"Nor I, either, Sister Louise. But you do everything to promote the happiness of others. You walk the earth, hear and feel that you are surrounded by laboring, throbbing, suffering humanity, hear their cry of hunger and distress and alleviate their woes."

"Dear Sister Catharine is all wrapped up in her religion. Her conversation and holiness have spread to the Mother house in Kentucky.

She is even the theme of conversation among the pupils. Do not we sisters daily hold her up as an example of religious excellence! It is wonderful in one so young."

"Do you know," continued Sister Benedicta, "Sister Bridget thinks she is so pious that she may be taken to heaven in a miraculous manner like Elijah."

"Ah! we shall all be compelled to go through the bitter agony, and I feel hopeful to think that God will be there with His hand to support me over the river, preceding my entrance into the life eternal."

"Yet, if this piety of Sister Catharine should go on increasing as she advances towards maturity, what a dazzling height she may reach! Innumerable are the religious benefits to be derived from such a holy source; she may be canonized. What a prospect!"

"True. See her now, walking through the arbor with folded arms and downcast eyes, meditating upon spiritual matters. She is unconscious of comment and apparently unaware of the murmurs of approbation which sound around her."

"She will be one of the elect."

The great enthusiasm and fanaticism of the Jewish convert were the talk of the town. Mrs. Gaffry, née Mary Moss, heard, saw and wondered. Having some time previously discovered that proselytism was not her fate, she construed the word of Genesis to her own satisfaction, viz.: that it was no more good for a woman to be alone than for man, and had

taken a husband for better or for worse. It appeared to be the latter. Her joys had not increased since her marriage, but her troubles had trebled. Her husband generally invested the wages of his labor in liquor, and left her and her infant to struggle for themselves. At the first scene of her husband's violence, Mrs. Gaffry had fled to her mother's, but shortly afterwards Mrs. Moss became ill and indigent, and the poor woman, in the dead of winter, had frequently taken her infant in her arms and gone to the convent. There she would pour out the vials of wrath on matrimony and wish she had followed the footsteps of Sister Catharine. The young nun would tell her, "The greater the cross the greater the glory. Hug it to your bosom."

"Oh, Sister Catharine," Mrs. Gaffry would reply, "you cannot imagine my sufferings. My husband fails to provide for me and our child; crazed by drink, he has struck me. Though everything is hot with his sulphurous breath, I am freezing. There is no coal in the bin, no meat in the larder. Poor, unhappy me," and the once strong woman would weep.

"O, thou of little faith," Sister Catharine would answer. "Christ will provide as he did for his disciples and the multitude, out of the seven loaves and the few little fishes."

The more practical Sister Louise would come and say: "Here, I have brought you a glass of generous wine, which is kept only for the sick, but you are sick and need it. And

now you must come with me and have a good, hearty meal."

"Sister Louise, my condition is terrible," Mrs. Gaffry would rejoin, "though when I leave here I always feel stronger. I do not know whether to attribute it to Sister Catharine's religious sayings or to the substantial food you place before me."

"To both, my dear," Sister Louise would murmur.

"And I try to do better," Mrs. Gaffry would respond, "when I leave hereby imitating you good women. I repress my complainings at the brutal words of my husband, but when he comes staggering in with oaths in his mouth, strikes me and the wailing infant, too, then I fly with terror in my eyes and horror in my soul. When I return the next day, the little home presents a demoralized appearance. Every room is strewn with the debris of the last night's tempest, raised within the heart of man by the demon drink. When he gets sober I entreat him, in the name of Christ, to commence life anew, and give up that which makes him act as if he were possessed by devils, renders life hideous and drags us down, down into the very depths of poverty and wretchedness"

On a cold, windy evening in the latter part of March, Mrs. Gaffry again sought an asylum at the convent.

"Poor Mrs. Gaffry, are you in trouble again?" and Sister Louise put her arms around

the neck of the poor woman and wept tears of sympathy.

"And to think," answered she, "I am bound to this wretch for life. Though I may leave him, I cannot be divorced, as our blessed Church annuls no marriage ties."

It was the day before Sister Catharine was to take perpetual vows, and she had applied herself with more fervor, if that were possible, to her devotions. "Why do you not remain where you belong?" cried she. "You have deserted your post. There is no redemption without suffering."

"But I tell you," and Mrs. Gaffry's voice grew extremely piteous, "it grows worse and worse. If I had remained at home to-night my husband would have maimed me and my babe," and she drew the sleeping child closer to her heart. "Yes, maimed me," and her voice rose to a high pitch of excitement, "precisely as he breaks up the furniture. I cannot submit to such indignities any longer, and what is more, I will not." Mrs. Gaffry raised her head in a manner which implied determination.

"What," replied Sister Catharine in a shrill voice, her eyes blazing with a baleful light, "You defy Mother Church? Would you see a soul going to everlasting punishment without stretching your arms to save?"

"I do try to save him. At my supplications he goes to confession, and what more can be done to save his besotted soul? And it will

save him," rejoined Mrs. Gaffry, with implicit faith.

"No, no," answered Sister Louise gently, "that will not do. If he commits faults, confession without repentance availeth naught."

"I say," retorted Sister Catharine, "she must suffer not alone for herself, but for his soul's salvation. Christ wants it. We are saved through a vicarious atonement, so can and will he be."

"Yes, saved through the death of Christ if we ourselves are penitent and resolved to sin no more; otherwise not. It is right for a woman to be meek and obedient to her husband, but it is not necessary that she should allow herself to be the target of a brutal one." Sister Louise's voice had more than usual warmth in it, her womanly instincts being aroused.

"I tell you again, as he cannot save himself, the more trouble she experiences the better for him. Aye, Mrs. Gaffry, you should covet contumely, humiliation, stripes, in fact, all that your husband in ignorance and cruelty can inflict. The world, generations of untold millions, have been and will be saved through the barbarous crucifixion of the Divine Son. Are you not happy to obey him and follow his precious example? I tell you we blessed Christians have much for which to thank the Pharisees. Our Lord's goodness and wisdom revealed the wickedness of their hypocritical hearts and drove them to crucify Him through whose blood—though born in sin—we are

saved. 'Oh, thou of little faith,' go home, woman, suffer agony, flagellation and martyrdom to be worthy to sit afterwards by Him, who did likewise for thee. Go!" Sister Catharine lifted her attenuated hand imperiously, and authoritatively pointed to the door. Her words were uttered in a quick, threatening manner, her eyes became fixed and her pale face attained the hue of death.

Poor Mrs. Gaffry, with her child clasped to her bosom, cowered in her chair during this severe denunciation and absolute command.

Sister Louise looked shocked, turned pale and regarded Sister Catharine with a mournful air.

The wind rolled down the chimney like a deep-drawn death sigh, dying mournfully away as if it were singing a threnody to the happy, but wrecked past.

Sister Catharine was the woman who a few years ago was a weak, timid girl, scarcely daring to assert that her soul was her own. She went dreamily along, sipping the sweets presented to her, but having neither the physical nor the moral force to throw out her hand and boldly say, "Let me have my preference."

Sister Louise was the first to break the painful silence. "Dear Sister, be not so harsh with our poor friend. She has great trials, though she should do her best to be resigned, and pray God to give her husband strength to overcome his evil propensities."

Sister Catharine burst into tears. It was the reaction of extreme harshness to extreme ten-

derness. She threw herself at the feet of Mrs. Gaffry and implored her pardon.

"Oh, not at my feet," exclaimed Mrs. Gaffry, endeavoring to raise her with one hand; for during the scene it had been forgotten to relieve her of the child, "you are a young saint. Your words are not born of harshness; they are inspired and are too exalted for a poor creature like me to appreciate at once. No deception, no hypocrisy, no gloss of any kind covers them, and they seem to be what might come from the lips of Christ himself. You are too good for this world; you are an angel."

From this outburst of lavish admiration might have been anticipated in return the warmest words of sympathy, the sweetest words of consolation. Mrs. Gaffry almost worshipped devotees; her eyes moistened and her heart was full of gratitude to such a heavenly preceptress.

Contrary to all expectations, Sister Catharine threw Mrs. Gaffry's hand away coldly, remarking: "I am weary. I shall go to bed. Good-night, sisters in Christ." By one common impulse each made the sign of the cross. "May the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings have you in His holy keeping." Her eyes swam again in tears and she abruptly left the room.

Sister Louise remained for a moment absorbed in thought and then in a sad voice said: "I fear that Sister Catharine has been too much agitated by the cares of the day. It has been a very long one for her; having risen un-

usually early, and since been close at her religious exercises; this may account for her erratic emotions."

"She is a saint, and will soon be an angel in heaven and can intercede for us at the throne of mercy," added Mrs. Gaffry.

"Come," replied Sister Louise, anxious to change the subject, "let me make some provision for you for the night. To-morrow I shall, please God, talk to Father Knowen, have him speak to your husband and command him to reform his wicked ways. The temperance movement is being agitated here, and I hear the good father will be enlisted in the crusade; probably your husband will come under its rules. Have hope and faith, and all may yet be well. God will not forget you."

Mrs. Gaffry, with a sigh, a tear, and her infant in her arms, followed her kind conductor to a place of repose. If the poor woman's arms were fatigued it was nothing in comparison to the weariness of her heart. "Ah!" mentally exclaimed she, "this evening's discourse has manifested to me that I should not have divulged my poignant distress at my husband's wickedness and cruelty. Is not the consolation of the confessional sufficient, and could I not have borne the stripes at home? I have 'unveiled the sanctuary,' and though I have revealed its holy mysteries to the sisters of my holy religion, women of real purity and refinement, yet the result is that one plainly and deservedly reproached me for not silently submitting to the will of God, while I imagine

the other one shuddered at my coarse impulses."

On her knees Mrs. Gaffry implored Divine guidance and strength. As she lay in bed she bedewed the pillow with tears; they were the tears produced by the firm resolution never to diverge from the one path, though no friendly ray of light should ever gleam on the way. The rising sun found her on her way home, there to remain with the father of her child until death should part them.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Sister Louise, after tending to the wants of Mrs. Gaffry, went into the boarders' infirmary. "Has Sister Catharine been in here?" inquired she of the inmates.

"Yes," was the response of all.

"She was in just a few moments before you came," added a pretty girl, with dark eyes and fair complexion, "and said a short prayer at my bedside. She looked tired but so sweetly beautiful. No angel could have a whiter face. I am sure the wings are only lacking to make her one."

"She is not feeling well. I think you four girls have been here long enough," said Sister Louise half jestingly. "I know you are all able to go downstairs except Anna May. How do you feel about studying?"

"I feel that I am not strong and can wait," returned Anna May.

"Take care that you are not too long about it. Good-night, dear children." Sister Louise, as she left the room, thanked God that Sister Catharine did not forget her simplest duties.

Sister Catharine had always been allowed to occupy a small room alone, in which she could study and prepare herself for the ceremonies without interfering with others. The walls of this room were literally covered with pictures of

saints and a large, silver cross hung at the head of her bed, the cross being the gift of a generous and wealthy Catholic lady whose heart was touched by her sincere piety. Though she prayed much in her own room, yet many a morning at three and four o'clock she was to be seen prostrated on the cold chapel floor.

Sister Louise passed this room. No light, no sound denoted any one stirring or awake within. She tapped lightly on the door and called, "Grace, Catharine!" No answer came. "Thank God she sleeps. That is just what she needs. This continual strain on her mind and body is too much. I am afraid of this tension. When she is once ours forever she will relax this effort after divine excellence. It will be better; yes, much better. She sleeps. May the holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, protect her," and the nun devoutly crossed herself. After this soliloquy she passed on with a contented look.

But the occupant of the room was not asleep. That was precisely what her tortured mind could not obtain. She had not slept much the previous night; the greater part of it she had spent on her knees in the chapel, and in going over with rapturous delight page after page of Biblical and ecclesiastical reading. She had worked herself to the highest pitch of religious ecstasy and had accomplished tasks mechanically.

"What is the matter with me?" Sister Catharine had said that day. "At times I am floating, ascending to the Prince of Peace. It is only when I stumble as my foot strikes against something that the dull reality comes back to me. I

am, after all, on the pine floor of the convent. I must not think that way." But in a moment after imagination, with her wild chariot, again transported her to the realms above.

Prior to Mrs. Gaffry's coming Sister Catharine had experienced a whirling sensation of the head, and though weak, she felt supernaturally strong. She was so angry at the woman for not remaining with her husband and suffering patiently as Christ had done, that she had barely power to restrain herself from striking her. When Sister Louise looked at her so compassionately and disapproved of her severe ideas of goodness, a revolution came over her. This was so violent that she hastened to the infirmary, not for the children, but that God would take the evil from her heart.

"I shall feel better when I am in my room," said Sister Catharine as she left the children. And she locked the door of her room, lighted the lamp and then said: "Nonsense, I shall extinguish it and be in darkness with my own miserable thoughts. I shall not go to bed," and she threw herself into a chair.

The reaction had come. As her spirits had risen to exaltation, she now felt overwhelmingly sad and depressed. She heard the gentle tap at the door, the mild voice she loved so well, the call, "Grace." Heavens! that name sent her thoughts years backward. She raised her head with a brightened eye. One more call like that and she would have sprung forward, and probably relieved her overwrought brain by weeping and sobbing on the good sister's breast. The call

came again, but not as before; it was "Catharine." Sister Catharine's head fell, her eyes closed and no sound indicated to the one without that she was awake.

Sister Louise passed on, and Sister Catharine, with her head bent down to her knees, sank into the deepest apathy. She sat there for hours in a dull stupor. She was not asleep, but her thoughts hovered on the confines of the real and the ideal world, till a vision passed through her heated brain.

The air appeared filled with a mist, the mist deepened in density and assumed the shape of clouds; the clouds drifted around. Above the clouds angels looked down; above them the clouds accumulated into heavy compact masses; there no human eye could penetrate. Beyond was the Infinite. Below the angels another figure exhibited itself; it was a woman with soft, clinging drapery, a harp in her hand and with sad, downcast eyes. Beneath the region of the clouds was an illumined altar, priests chanting in sacred vestments, acolytes standing on every side. Then a number of nuns filed in, one by one, followed by a novice. The novice bore the form of Grace, who was no longer to be a neophyte, but to be received as one forever, devoted to a life of religion and seclusion. An organ floated in the air and struck up a soul-inspiring anthem; the song burst forth with a pealing sound, and through all was to be heard the tolling of a bell. The woman in the clouds uttered a piercing cry, "Grace, come back to me!" the clouds closed around her, angels and all dissolved in the air.

The scene vanished with wonderful celerity, but Sister Catharine, fully aroused by that shriek, with a low responding echo, "Mother, I come," bounded from her room down the long, dark corridor into the garden, to the gate, which she automatically opened, and rushed through the deserted streets like a hunted deer to her uncle's door, where she fell unconscious. The first gray streak of dawn threw its soft shades over her and the town wrapped in slumber.

Mrs. Rheinberg, who had been attending her daughter, Rachel, for a slight indisposition, heard a fall, and was quickly at the front door, where the expanding light of day revealed the ghastly, insensible face of a woman, which upon closer inspection proved to be Grace. Her shrieks soon brought her husband to her side, and as they looked at each other's blanched faces, Mr. Rheinberg, who was the first to recover his presence of mind, exclaimed, "Let us take her in."

"Her hands are stiff with cold. She must have run all the way from the convent without any wrap on."

"Yes, and most likely with a blind man's precision. I suppose she knew no more what she was about this morning than on that ever-to-be-remembered day when she went to the convent.

The uncle lifted her tenderly, and carefully carried her into the room which had so long been vacant, awaiting her. And he reverently drew aside the black veil.

"I will take it off altogether," said Mrs. Rheinberg, "and the white cap, too."

Massed around the head of the girl were little golden curls which defied caps and all kinds of repressions, so hard is it to suppress the nature of anything.

Mrs. Rheinberg hastily slipped on her dress and put her ear to the heart of her niece. A feeble fluttering told her that life was not extinct. She turned her head and said as she thought to her husband: "Blessed be the God of Israel, she lives."

"Mr. Rheinberg," said Susan, making her appearance half undressed, "woke me up and told me he was going for a doctor."

"Come in, don't stand there shivering. I am doing that with all my might. Come, let us rub her."

"Who is it, Mrs. Rheinberg?"

"Why, mercy me, where are your eyes? Grace, to be sure."

"So it is. Heaven save us," replied the girl, dropping on her knees.

Mr. Rheinberg went after Dr. Harriot, who was inebriated the day before, going through the town boasting that his equal had not existed since the days of Galen and Hippocrates.

"I hope the good doctor has left off yesterday's debauch. Where life and death are concerned I have no confidence in anyone but him." The next question, "How can I awake him so early in the morning," was Mr. Rheinberg's thought.

The approach to the house was guarded by a sentinel almost as fierce, though one-headed, as the Stygian Cerberus, but the doctor's man-of-all-

work, coming at that moment to muzzle the animal, saved Mr. Rheinberg the trouble of eluding it.

"Ah, man, I was just wondering how I could pass by that big dog."

"Yes, sir. Troubles generally lessen when you come near them. That shows one ought to take life easy."

"Is the doctor in?"

"Yes, indeed," answered the loquacious Thomas, "not having gone out. If you are in great need of him you can thank his liking for good old Bourbon whiskey. He had two calls last night—one at ten, another at twelve o'clock—but he wouldn't go, so I was obliged to say he was out. You see, sir, many greater men than I must say what is not so for a living. I am a very truthful man. A man to be depended upon," and he threw his head back with some dignity.

"I have no doubt of your honesty; not a bit of it. Try your best, good man, and wake the doctor. Here is a half-dollar for your pains. Tell him I want to see him on a matter of life or death."

"Life or death, is it? Come in, sit down and make yourself comfortable by the fire. Nothing like a good, roaring fire on cold days."

"If you please, Thomas ——"

"Aha! you are anxious, I see. Is your wife sick?"

"No, no, my niece. Please hurry."

"Hurry? To be sure I will. I would do anything for you. I know you for years and will do my best for you. You are frowning; well, I

will go. I shall have a nice time, I dare say." A noise was heard from the room above. "That boot I should have had to dodge if I had been up there, but I am an artful dodger, you know," Thomas said with a knowing wink, though not aware that he was plagiarizing from one of Dickens' works of fiction, and he was all the more satisfied in his ignorance.

"Yes, I know, but my good fellow go this moment," said Mr. Rheinberg, impatient for him to proceed on the errand. If time and tide wait for no man, what shall we say of death?"

"Yes, yes, indeed I will go, I will. You have a large heart and I respect you, sir," and out went Thomas, to the great satisfaction of Mr. Rheinberg, who was becoming alarmed that it would take as long to get the man out as to bring the master down.

Every moment appeared an eternity to poor Rheinberg. So deeply absorbed was he in his reverie that he did not hear the pompous but good and wise doctor coming in, who always paid the penalty of his intemperance by fearful headaches and was correspondingly cross, until he was startled by a low voice exclaiming: "What in the devil do you want so early in the morning, taking people out of their beds in such cold weather?"

"There is some one very sick at the house, doctor. I want you to come immediately."

The physician rang the bell violently, but with trembling hands, and responded, "You do, eh?" When Thomas appeared he said to him: "Glasses

for two. What will you have, whisky or brandy?"

"My God, man, I want no liquor now, it is a matter of life or death. Don't delay an instant, it would be cruel. Come right away," and he pulled the physician's arm in an excited manner.

"Man, I must have a stimulant. I have over-fatigued my mental faculties—hem, hem"—drank too much he should have said—"and I must have some liquor to restore the mind, whose energy has been reduced and the equilibrium disturbed by yesterday's work." Having thus demonstrated that 'action and reaction are the great laws of the animal economy,' he took from the hand of Thomas, who had returned with a decanter, a small glass of raw whisky and offered another to Rheinberg, which the latter courteously declined.

"I will get your great coat," said Thomas, anxious to earn his fifty cents, and he was rewarded with a look of gratitude from Mr. Rheinberg.

The physician, with the assistance of the attendant, was soon enveloped in his overcoat and so seemed not very unlike a shaggy bear, but he often held in his hand the key of life.

"The buggy," cried Thomas in a frightened way.

"No time now, no time. No chance for display of your protean character," replied the sympathetic physician. "Come, Rheinberg."

"I am glad you were in, doctor. You are the only physician in town that I have any confidence in."

"It is good you did not go for one of those

homœopathists, with their candy globules. There is Dr. Green, because he has been successful in three or four cases, thinks he will soon be considered 'the best in town.' I denounce in measured terms any practice based on their absurd 'Similia similibus curantur.' "

"It is Sister Catharine!" said Dr. Harriot as he was shown up to the bedside and looked into the now opened eyes of the sick girl.

"Yes, my poor niece."

"She does not know me. Her pulse," said the physician, feeling it, "beats with frightful rapidity. Everything denotes that she has again subjected herself to a high mental pressure." After a careful diagnosis he prescribed a composing draught, and then, with all the bluntness of his nature, asked: "How came she here?"

Mrs. Rheinberg gave a sesquipedalian account of how she discovered her in the doorway.

"It is very astonishing to me. I have frequently prescribed for her since she took the veil, and she always appeared supremely happy."

"Indeed," added Mrs. Rheinberg, with some heat, "for what can she have come back, but to return to the faith of her fathers?"

"Never mind, Clara, what you think led her to take this step. Doctor, all I beg of you is that if the nuns should wish her to be removed to the convent, you will not consent until she can decide for herself."

"She shall not go until she can," quickly responded he. "Though I know there is salvation in my church, the blessed Church of Rome, I

would not have her one of us without her own free will. I would make and retain proselytes by persuasion, by conviction, not by compulsion. I wish to be a Catholic in the literal sense of the word, too."

"Ah, Clara," said Mr. Rheinberg after the doctor had gone, "I am much to blame for this poor girl's trouble. I did not do my duty."

"I am sure you were always kind and gentle to her."

"Yes, but I should have compelled you and Letitia to have acted differently towards her."

"To talk against poor Letitia now, when she will soon be here in her misery. Oh, me!" added Mrs. Rheinberg, bursting into a flood of tears.

"Well, Clara, for heaven's sake don't commence crying here. Things are bad enough as they are, but tears won't make them any better. Anyway, I wonder what brought Grace back. Did she lose courage at the last moment, learn to think differently, or has she long been going crazy?"

"I think she wants to be one of us again."

"I hope so. I shouldn't wonder but what one of the sisters will soon be after her."

"A nun," said Susan, entering without rapping, "wishes to see you, Mr. Rheinberg. She gave her name as Sister Louise."

"Tell her I will see her."

"And so will I," said Mrs. Rheinberg.

"Had you not better stay with Grace?"

"No, Susan, stay here. Come, Joseph, we will go together," and she took her husband by the arm and they went downstairs to see the visitor.

Sister Louise, after performing her matutinal devotions, which she had done earlier than usual that morning, bethought herself of Sister Catharine. Sister Catharine's door was only partially closed, and the sister in passing observing this, thought she had chosen to say her prayers in the chapel, where so many of the nuns were assembled. Not finding her there she imagined she was in the vestry. Too religious to allow earthly thoughts to interfere with her prayers, and by that vow of passive obedience which she had taken to consecrate herself to Christ and by the love she bore Him, she said all her prayers without exhibiting the least emotion. But no sooner had she risen from her knees and made the last genuflection, than her thoughts and feet flew to Sister Catharine's room. The bed was undisturbed, everything was in order. Nothing told of that silent but fearful struggle of a woman with her own troubled brain.

Sister Louise went rapidly in the direction of the boarders' infirmary, when she almost collided with the portress, Sister Mary.

"What is the matter?"

"I am looking for Mother Therese," responded Sister Mary with a pale face and quaking voice. "The gate was not only unlocked this morning, but standing wide open. There must have been robbers in the place."

"Let me go and ask Mr. Malone," who was the gardener and lived at the farthest end of the convent grounds.

"I have already asked him and he declared he saw 'no print o' thieves nowhere,' but I am sure

some one must have come in. I locked it myself. It was open and that is evidence enough, I am sure."

It never once occurred to Sister Mary that some one might have gone out.

Sister Louise turned pale at the mere idea of the solution of the enigma, but asked, with her usual calm voice, "Have you seen Sister Catharine this morning?"

"No, I must seek Sister Therese," and Sister Mary hurried on.

Sister Louise went to the other building, but found not the beloved one whom she sought. "Come with me," said Sister Mary, joining her. "Mother Therese wants you."

Sister Louise entered a room with her companion, and there found the Mother Superior and nuns all assembled, discussing the question about the gate.

"I am terribly frightened," said old Sister Mary Ann.

"I think the wind blew it open," added Sister Benedicta.

"And I think it was an oversight, that Sister Mary forgot to lock it," said Sister Bridget.

"What have you to say, Sister Louise?" quietly asked Mother Therese.

"Yes, let us hear what she has to say," the nuns exclaimed.

Sister Louise was so good, so sincere, that all loved her. She aroused no jealousy. They attributed to her a superior merit for her admirable qualities. The old nuns petted her, the youthful ones gloried in her pious example.

"First, let me ask you a question," replied Sister Louise. "Have any of you seen Sister Catharine?"

"No," was the unanimous response.

"Mother and sisters," said Sister Louise in a gentle tone, rest assured no one has come in, but some one has gone out."

"Any one of the pupils missing?" inquired Mother Therese.

"No, Mother, but Sister Catharine is."

"Sister Catharine!" cried the nuns in chorus.

"Explain," cried Mother Therese.

"Her room is vacant, her bed is undisturbed," resumed Sister Louise; "she has not been seen by any one this morning. Yesterday she was laboring under great religious excitement, and I think, in a moment of mental aberration, wandered from the convent."

"Your words carry instant conviction to my mind," said Mother Therese.

"This day you all know Sister Catharine was to have taken the perpetual vows. I fear she is seriously ill, and if her former weak and vacillating disposition should return to her, may she not manifest an inclination to remain away from us?"

"True," assented Mother Therese.

"The result would then be the loss of her own soul, which pains me most deeply. My love for her," said Sister Louise with tears in her eyes, "budded forth when she was at school and of late years it has expanded into a full blown flower, which indicates my thoughts are still bound to earthly things. I have confessed and inflicted

penance on myself for it," and she lowered her head in deep humility.

"Sister Louise, this wandering for something to love is not so bad as it might be. Pray God for strength to overcome temptation. Where do you suppose Sister Catharine has gone?"

"I think a kind of instinct might have led her to her uncle's house," rejoined Sister Louise.

"So do I. Now, sisters, do you not all think it better that Sister Louise should go to Mr. Rheinberg's and ascertain if Sister Catharine is there?"

"By all means," was the unanimous reply.

"It is decided then. Sister Louise, go, and I earnestly hope your influence will be as great as on previous occasions. If she should not be there I shall apply to the fathers of the college for advice and act accordingly. Go, and may the Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

Thus it was that Sister Louise arrived at Mr. Rheinberg's house shortly after Dr. Harriot's departure and asked if Sister Catharine were there.

"Grace Feld is here," answered Mrs. Rheinberg.

"Yes, madam," quickly interposed Mr. Rheinberg, "she is here," and he related how he and his wife had found her.

"Yes, her senses have left her. It is a judgment from God," added Mrs. Rheinberg, who, though a good woman in her way, said at times very harsh things, especially of apostates to their faith. She was far from enjoying that magnanimity of soul which teaches us to feel that if others differ from us on so vital a point it is because

their minds are not capable of receiving the same impressions as ours, making them neither better nor worse, and that this spiritual perception comes from a higher source. There is no positive authority for any one to say, "This view of God will gain him the kingdom of heaven," for no one has returned from the celestial abode.

"Talk not of judgment," asseverated Sister Louise in a calm voice. "The Virgin Mary will protect her."

"Come upstairs and see my niece," said Mr. Rheinberg, at the same time casting a severe look upon his wife.

"Thank you," replied Sister Louise with a graceful inclination of her head. It was with the greatest effort that she concealed her agitation; still she walked up to Grace with a placid smile, took both of her hands in hers with the soft caress of a mother, and said, "Dear Sister Catharine, do you not know me?" and her hands glided to the forehead of Grace with the same soothing touches as of old.

"Yes," answered she in a feeble voice. "I am very weak; a few hours have committed the ravages of weeks, but I am not delirious now. I know you."

"Who am I?" the nun inquired breathlessly.

"You are Sister Louise. Dear friend, I am glad you have come, as I wish to tell you something."

Mrs. Rheinberg, who stood at the foot of the bed, was opening her mouth in a protest, when her husband again regarded her austerely, which kept her quiet for the time.

"Do you?" responded Sister Louise cautiously. "That is for what I have come, to see and hear what I can do for you," and she gently rubbed her hands.

"Well, I shall tell you something, but I did not know it before. You know I have never concealed anything from you. I have laid bare my whole life to you," and her eyes grew wild.

"Yes, I know you have ever loved me, but you are not at confession now. Only tell me what will relieve your mind, my dear Sister Catharine," and Sister Louise gently touched her face.

"Yes, I shall tell you," and Grace dropped her eyes and said in a low voice, though not so low as not to be overheard by her aunt and uncle.

"I am going to my eternal home. My mother called me last night—implored me to come. I shall go very soon, maybe to-day or to-morrow; if not, then soon, very soon. I long to be going," and she arose as if to get out of bed.

Mrs. Rheinberg commenced sobbing, her husband moved forward, but the nun laid her gently down and took up her old position.

"Yes, dear, you may go home, but are you not anxious to come home first with me?" said Sister Louise zealously. "To-day is your grand bridal day. You will be pledged to Christ forever. Come, let me order a carriage and take you to our home, to my loving arms, where I can nurse and attend you as before. What say you, dear Sister Catharine?"

"No, no," replied she knowingly; it seemed to her as if she had told a mighty secret, the simple

fancy of her mind assumed gigantic proportions.
"I told you my secret, that shows I love you."

"What did you tell me, dear?"

"What a poor memory you have. I told you I was going home."

"To the convent?"

"To heaven, I told you. I dare not go back to the convent with you."

"Dare not? Who lays embargo on your going? I am sure your good uncle will not."

"No, not he, but my mother. She appeared to me last night, and her look of entreaty and her cry of agony prohibit me from going with you. She bade me come back to her and I fled from the convent. I shall never go back," and she wearily closed her eyes.

Here was something unlooked for. It was now not a battle against earthly beings, but one against a disembodied spirit.

"Is this beloved one so near the goal of my terrestrial hope and ambition to be snatched from me to die among these people?" were Sister Louise's thoughts and a coldness seized her.

"Dear Sister Catharine, you grieve me to the heart. Do you believe in spiritualism? I hope your mother is at rest; do you not think and hope so?" said Sister Louise, aware that she was dealing with one whose mind at that moment exhibited intense excitement, if not actual derangement.

"She cannot rest if I remain in the convent."

"Think, I love you with all the tenderness and devotion of a mother; would I advise you to do

wrong? You know I do not care simply for a proselyte, but your soul is so precious to me."

"I cannot argue with you. I do not know what to say, but I know I must not go back with you."

"Well, then, dear Catharine, I must leave you. I must go home alone, all alone, to live and die alone. I must no more be around to kiss, nurse and soothe you. In vain has been my labor, as well as your heretofore inestimable example, which exerted such a powerful influence on those surrounding you. Think, it is not for yourself alone. Religion in the convent will receive a check and much youthful enthusiasm will be dampened. I must never place confidence, such loving faith, in any human being, as I have done in you," said Sister Louise with moistened eyes.

"I could weep with you, and do."

"Catharine, those tears are encouraging. Come," and Sister Louise extended her arms.

"I shall never go back," resolutely answered Grace. "But what is the difference, in all the world there is none like you. You are an angel, and next to God and my mother, I love you. I could worship you. Stay with me until I go. I shall not tax your patience long."

"No," replied Sister Louise, whose voice was tremulous with emotion and full of sadness. "I must go home."

"Stay here, I implore you."

"I must go. I have other duties to attend to. Oh, Catharine," and her voice rose to a cry, "I entreat, pray you on my knees," and she sank down by the bed, "for the love I bear you and

for the hope of heaven, do not desert our holy religion."

"I love you and would be glad to please you, but dare not."

"She was quite out of her mind and knew no one at first, as I have already told you, but the medicine the doctor gave her worked almost instantly and made her come to herself. I am afraid this is too much for her," said Mr. Rheinberg, stepping forward.

"You are right," was Sister Louise's reply, as Grace began to toss and rave violently. "I have been wrong. With your permission I shall call again. She may be in a different mood then."

"Madam, consider yourself at liberty to call whenever you like and stay as long as you please. Were there more such as you the world would be better and religion would not be losing as it is its hold on mankind. Your good deeds have gone before you. All the orphans in town remember you in their prayers. I respected you before you came; I now think more of you than ever." Mr. Rheinberg opened the door for her with the same deference that he would have manifested towards a queen. Sister Louise humbly bent her head in acknowledgment; her heart was too full for words.

"Thank God," said Mrs. Rheinberg, "that woman with the black veil is gone. I breathe easier. Indeed, it was all I could do to be still."

"You are entirely too quick and too hard."

"What news?" said the nuns as Sister Louise entered the room where they were assembled when she returned.

"I shall tell you all. Sister Catharine is lying ill at her uncle's, and I fear is lost to us forever. She abjures her new faith and goes back to her old one."

"Recants!" screamed a babel of voices.

"Sisters!" said Mother Therese in her dignified and commanding way, and all were silent. "Sister Louise, you have been weeping."

"Mother, I have wept bitter tears of vexation and sorrow. So much to have gained, almost at the goal of my wishes, now to lose all—and her soul."

"Her flight may be attributed to mental aberration, as it is," quietly said the Mother Superior.

"True, Mother, but if she persist in not coming back her soul will be lost. Oh, the pain."

"Christ suffered much."

"I shall take example of the good Shepherd. I shall work all the harder, employ my leisure in performing good deeds. By healing the wounds of others I shall mitigate my own. Mother, I entreat you to permit me to visit her daily."

"Sister Louise, as you have been the groundwork of her conversion, and she has been the pupil of your hand and mind, you may go. The seed that you planted may still bear fruition."

"I hope it may. Thanks, good Mother."

"How is the poor, unfortunate girl?" said Sister Benedicta, as Sister Louise came from Mr. Rheinberg's on the third day of her illness.

"Wicked creature," added Sister Bridget as she was passing.

"Poor thing," returned Sister Louise, "the lamp

is slowly but surely burning out. Her sorrows, conversion, renunciation and mental weakness are the theme of conversation everywhere. I hear of them as I walk in the streets. But all will soon be over."

"Poor Ann Miller is feeling miserable over the affair."

"I shall see her after I have reported to Mother Therese. My lily is dying," and Sister Louise pressed her hands to her heart.

"Man is like vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away," said Sister Benedicta. "I cannot imagine what came over the girl though at the last moment."

"She was always changeable, and devoted her mind too closely to religion. I would I had the time over again. I shall pray for strength, which almost deserts me at times. 'The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him—all that call upon Him in truth.'"

"Now you speak like my own, dear Sister Louise. Is not our physician there?"

"Yes. There was to be a consultation of doctors yet to-day. Mrs. Rheinberg has had hard work to persuade Dr. Harriot; finally he consented to permit it, but here medical skill is of no avail," said Sister Louise mournfully.

"Doctor, what is it, how is it?" asked Mr. Rheinberg as the physician came from the room of his niece, on the fourth day of her illness.

"Must I tell you in words? Does not my face show you there is no hope?"

"Save her, save her!"

"Here, Rheinberg, have I not done my duty? Have I imbibed one drop of liquor since your niece has been ill, and does that not show my sympathy and regard?"

"It does, Doctor, it does."

"Well, then," continued the doctor, grasping Rheinberg's hand and squeezing it, "I want some brandy and that is another indication of my sentiments, as the abandonment of hope renders me weak, and stimulants are a necessity to me."

"You shall have all you want. But tell me, has everything been done for her?"

"Was there not a consultation of physicians?" demanded the physician coldly.

"Yes, but the nursing," said the agonized uncle.

"Your own wife is nurse, and a most assiduous one she is."

"Why shouldn't she be?"

"That is just what I say. Come, take some brandy, it will compose your nerves," added the doctor good-naturedly. "You must submit to the inevitable like a man."

"Letitia coming home a widow, in indigent circumstances, Grace dying; how horrible! My heart is heavy, heavy," was Mrs. Rheinberg's mental sayings, and ever and anon when the eyes of her niece were closed, she would raise her handkerchief to her face and softly weep.

The paroxysmal derangement of Grace had yielded to death's premonitory symptoms; her mind had become lucid. She was not aware of any death in the family, as Mrs. Rheinberg wore no mourning, and thinking she was the sole

"Our life has been stormy, has it not?" said Mrs. Rheinberg laying her hand tenderly on her husband's shoulder.

"Before it was troublesome, still often pleasant; now it is stormy." Had he read Voltaire he might have exclaimed with him, 'No one desires to live his life over again.'

"I have always had the worst of it, haven't I, Joseph?"

"I don't think so. I have always tried to make it as easy as possible for you."

"But women, you know, bear the brunt of everything. You see I must go to Grace and not stand here," and Mrs. Rheinberg left her husband to make his way to the little sitting-room where, undisturbed, he could indulge his sorrow to the fullest extent and have no witness but God of his emotions. None are so poor, none so rich, none so lonely, none so exalted, but that their bitter moments come.

Mr. Rheinberg imagined, as many do, that God had laid a double affliction upon him and forgotten others whose lot was a feast of roses. It was beyond his comprehension, this unequaled division of health, strength, suffering, wealth, rank, power and genius. He knew nothing of the philosophy which Pope's beautiful lines suggest and which should reach all hearts:

"All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good;

And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, whatever is, is right."

In the depth of his sorrow he could not find comfort either in the declaration, "One generation passes away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever." He forgot the "Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

His head sank lower on his breast, and his hand went to his head, and tears, which flow so easily from woman's eyes, but rend the heart of man, fell between his open fingers. In a moment more the door was opened, a woman entered, warm hands entwined his neck.

"Is it you, my darling?" said Mr. Rheinberg as he looked up in astonishment and beheld Letitia.

"It is I," replied Mrs. Arnold, who was deathly pale, her mourning garb enhancing her pallor.

"Thank God that I see you once again," added Mr. Rheinberg as he took her and pressed her to his aching heart. "And you, my poor child, have suffered, too!" The tears which he had barely repressed, sprang again to his eyes.

"Yes, father," she responded as she bent her beautiful head, "my husband is dead and buried," Mrs. Arnold threw all the weight she could into those words, wishing to convey the idea to her father that all her suffering concentrated in the loss of Arnold. Never more on earth would a word of censure against her husband escape her lips. Her parents should never have knowledge of her cares, her lonely, dreary, midnight vigils,

his wild riotous career, his unjust and harsh treatment of her.

"The loss of a husband, my darling girl, is indeed a sad and heavy one. May God comfort you. Your mother and I will try our best to soften your grief."

"How are dear mother and the children?"

"She is well now, but we have had much trouble and sickness in the family."

"Poor mother! Do you ever hear of Grace?" Since Mrs. Arnold had met Lavalley she was in a nervous state about her cousin; she feared she knew not what.

"Yes, but I grieve to say——"

"Speak, speak. Do not keep me one moment in suspense," said Mrs. Arnold, trembling with agitation.

"Be quiet, my dear, Grace is here and has turned back to the faith of her fathers."

"Gracious heaven, what do I hear?" and Mrs. Arnold sank into a chair, overcome with emotion.

"Letitia——"

"Lavalley," exclaimed Mrs. Arnold with uplifted hands, heedless of her father's pained face. "God has looked down upon your heart-felt despair."

"Do not speak of him. I shudder at his name; he is a villain." The door opened as Mr. Rheinberg uttered the last sentence, and Lavalley entered, pale and haggard.

"I am indeed a villain," cried he. "Take me to see Grace once more, then I shall bless the hand that will take my unworthy life."

Mrs. Arnold jumped up from her chair, exclaiming wildly, "She lives, she is here, she is yours." These words, "she is yours," cost her even at that moment a pang so violent that she considered it should be sufficient punishment for her wickedness.

Lavalle on the arrival of the train sent his baggage to the hotel and was immediately driven to Mr. Rheinberg's store and inquired for the proprietor. The friendly clerk, who was a new one, informed him that Mr. Rheinberg was at home because his niece was in a dying condition.

"What niece?" asked he abruptly.

"I see you must be a stranger here. The girl's parents died some few years ago, her lover abandoned her, she went into the convent, left last—"

Lavalle waited to hear no more, rushed into the cab, gave the driver the direction and shouted, "Drive for your life! You shall be well paid!" Therefore he arrived at the house only a few moments later than Mrs. Arnold.

"That man must be an escaped lunatic," concluded Mr. Rheinberg's clerk. And he thanked God for his deliverance.

"Man, are you here?" said Rheinberg excitedly.

"For God's sake, do not delay. Bring me to Grace. Each moment is precious. Where is she?" Cold beads of perspiration stood on Lavalle's brow.

"Father, I entreat you, think not wrongly of Mr. Lavalle. Come," added Mrs. Arnold in her

old, determined way, "I think I can find her. I know where she is most likely to be."

"Child, Grace is very sick and cannot bear much excitement. Be careful or you may at once snap life's frail thread."

"Father, I beg you, torture him no longer. He has been far more sinned against than sinning, take the explanations afterwards."

Lavalle gave Mrs. Arnold a grateful look.

"Stop, if you will have it, Letitia, that he shall see her, I must go first and prepare her for the shock. You can both stand outside the door and when I think the moment favorable I shall call you." His resentment had already passed away before the exquisite agony of Lavalle, who was trembling like an aspen leaf.

Mr. Rheinberg led the way, treading cautiously, followed by his two companions.

"If I had not given way to that explosion of temper," thought Lavalle, "how different things would have been. I pray God that I shall never again be attacked with that hideous convulsion." But, like a day that has fled, hasty words and harsh actions cannot be recalled.

When her uncle entered the room Grace lay with her eyes closed, but her hearing was very acute and the least sound disturbed her. He whispered something in his wife's ear, she turned pale, but remained in the room.

"Uncle, I have been dreaming," said Grace, opening her eyes. "I saw such heavenly visions and heard such fine music. I think I have been in heaven," and she smiled sweetly. That smile

stabbed her uncle to the heart ; her aunt, as usual, dissolved into tears.

"Why not think of us earthly ones?" responded Mr. Rheinberg in a melancholy voice, broken with sobs. "Try and stay with us."

"I cannot, uncle, I am called."

"Dearest girl, is there no one you would like to see?"

"Yes, I must say good-bye to the children and Sister Louise. I cannot die without her."

"Dear child, they shall all be here. I wish Letitia was here, I know she would like to see you."

"God forgive me for being so uncharitable as not to think of her. The Jewish religion teaches forgiveness, and surely so does the Christian, so between the two I have been pretty well taught. I have no ill-feeling toward any one. Tell my cousin when you see her that I asked God to bless her."

"I think Letitia will be here very soon."

"Then I hope it will be soon; for I am surely going; my hours are numbered. Uncle, if she come, I shall kiss her with my lips and my heart will respond. Sister Louise told me to be sincere in all things. I wish Letitia were here to show you that I am reconciled to her."

"Letitia, darling girl, will gladly ask your pardon for not being as tender as she might have been when you were with us," said Mr. Rheinberg, knowing of no other wrong.

It was not until long after the death of Grace that Mrs. Arnold, on her knees, avowed her guilt to her parents, in attempting to alienate the affections of Lavallo.

"I do not wish her to ask my pardon. I only wish I could see her."

"God is good," and her uncle steadied his voice, "she is here."

Mr. Rheinberg went to the door and beckoned to his daughter. Letitia came in with faltering steps and threw herself on her knees before the bed. In this sad moment mother and daughter forgot each other.

"Don't give way," whispered her father, "excitement will quicken her death. See how she looks."

"In this solemn meeting, dear Letitia, do not weep; kiss me," said Grace.

Mrs. Arnold threw her arms around her neck and wept bitter tears for the past, praying God to give her "a new heart."

"You are in trouble," and Grace put her thin, white hands on her cousin's black dress.

"Yes, Arnold is dead. My darling, he was my husband. Say, I beg of you to forgive him, as you have forgiven me."

"I have been taught, 'forgive thine enemies.' He relentlessly pursued me, separated me from Lavalley—God bless him—be still," added Grace, laying her hands on her throbbing heart.

"I met Mr. Lavalley on my travels."

A low cry escaped from the lips of Grace. Her aunt rushed to the bed with a cordial in her hand, which she gave her to drink, bathed her head with eau de Cologne and applied some smelling salts to her nostrils.

Lavalley, who could hear all through the partly opened door, could contain himself no longer.

"If it is death to her," he cried, "it is death for me to wait." He rushed in, pushed all aside and raised the half-fainting girl in his arms. He almost smothered her with kisses and she, with her physical as well as with her mental faculties much exhausted, gave herself up with dreamy abandon to those caresses, which she had neither the will nor the power to resist. With her mind fixed on heaven for so many months, and for the last few days of a dread certainty of soon standing in the presence of her Maker, her senses were so steeped in celestial delights that she almost imagined it was the foretaste of the bliss of paradise, and that her lover had come to join her on the journey. She was so weak that with rapture in her soul, she sank from half unconsciousness into a gentle slumber. Her respiration came even and soft and Lavalley held her, not daring to stir, for fear of awakening her. Not a sound was audible in the room save the ticking of the clock, which, where the very breathing was suppressed, disturbed the ear.

Lavalley's thoughts flew fast. "Can it be possible that God will take this lovely being from me? This intoxicating draught, which I once so madly dashed from me, and now once more within my reach, to be snatched from me forever. No, God will not do this. He will be merciful. Grace is not so ill; she is weak, but with my strong, warm love, I shall nurse into vitality the little spark of life that remains. I shall pray fervently, humbly to the great God to save her. If her death be decreed, All-powerful, take me as her substitute. She must not die; so young, so pure, so beautiful.

God will not yet claim this model of filial affection. I shall do charity; I shall build synagogues, aye, churches, too; I shall erect orphan asylums, endow hospitals, schools of science and art, I shall be a benefactor to the world at large, only God save my beloved Grace." To save her was the Alpha and Omega of his prayers.

After a light sleep of fifteen or twenty minutes, Grace opened her eyes and Lavalie gently laid her on the pillow.

"Is it you, William, or am I dreaming?" asked she in a thrilling voice.

"No, you are not dreaming, precious one. I am here, never more to leave you while life lasts."

"Ah! you forget I cannot give you the diamonds."

"Never mind the jewels, dear one. Arnold confessed his villainy on his death-bed. I must clear myself a little. Arnold told me falsehoods about you. I shall tell you all when you are strong. The disposal of those jewels shall bring you the purest, the most devoted love a man can give and in after years procure you a crown in heaven. Beloved one, only get well."

"God reward Arnold for confessing before dying that I had not wronged you, that my intentions were good," and Grace labored for breath.

"Waste not your thoughts or breath upon him. Think only of yourself, of my love, and live," entreated Lavalie.

"Alas, William, I cannot stay with you. I would that I could, but my hours are numbered."

"No, no, that must not be. If you die now, it

would be not only that you do not forgive me, but that God does not."

"You never wronged me, my idol!" Grace ignored, or probably at this moment forgot, the flirtation with Letitia. "I have nothing to forgive; as for God, He in His mercy and goodness, will forgive and bless you, but He knoweth what is for the best. He decrees that I leave you."

"Grace, do not talk to me of the goodness of God and of your leaving me in the same breath."

"Do not blaspheme, William." Here a gentle knock interrupted the conversation, and Grace, whose every word was exhausting the vital flame, closed her eyes, while Lavalley buried his face in the pillow.

Dr. Montmartre, after hearing at the hotel of the return and fatal illness of Grace, with a heart torn by conflicting emotions, inquired and was shown the way to Mr. Rheinberg's house. Laura, harassed with a thousand vague and undefinable fears, accompanied him.

"I do not know," said the minister, "if we shall be admitted, but I am so solicitous about Grace that I must make the attempt."

"I think they will," answered Laura.

"To think of that gentle creature, for whose sake I renounced marriage, now dying; she, who passed through such stormy trials, to have the cup of happiness dashed from her lips at the last moment, and called to pass through the dark tunnel! Lavalley, whose heart and soul yearns for her, will have only the exquisite agony of wit-

nessing the life of his darling ebb away. My anguish is indescribable.

"Dear brother, you were calmer when you had to suffer on another occasion."

"Listen, Laura. It was with pain in my heart that I knew Grace was to be affianced to another, but she lived and could and would probably be happy, enjoying life's delights. It was with fear, mixed with insane hopes, still, with composure, that I heard of her being immured within convent walls, dreading the results on such a tender, fragile being. But dying, the coffin lid soon to be screwed down on that fair face, that beautiful form to be decomposed, unnerves me."

"I am astonished that you who can endure all manner of torture and mental strain, should now be crushed by this intelligence."

"I could endure everything, but that she is within the shadow of death."

"But think, her immortal soul will go to God and be clothed in eternal beauty," and thus talking, brother and sister arrived at the house.

Mr. Rheinberg opened the door to Susan's knock. She handed him the minister's card, saying, "There is a lady, too; she did not say anything, but the minister declares he must see you."

"I know that name," answered he, for Mrs. Arnold had written to her father about the kindness of the minister and his sister.

"I will go and see them."

"I owe you ten thousand thanks," said Mr. Rheinberg to the minister, "for your goodness towards Mrs. Arnold. I am her father. I can never repay it."

"A minister should never forget common duty and humanity. But your niece is ill, very ill, I hear."

"She is very low," said Mr. Rheinberg brokenly. He had heard something from his sister, Mrs. Feld, before her death, relating to a proposition of marriage from a Christian clergyman, and now it was brought distinctly back to his remembrance.

"I wish to see her. You owe me thanks, you say; return them by allowing me to see her."

"Excitement, my dear sir, in her condition might kill her."

"Sir, I entreat you not to deny my prayer. I must see her. Have pity on me." The minister was human, and what man in such extremity weighs results?

And Mr. Rheinberg, who never liked to give pain, hesitatingly replied, "Well, come," and Dr. Montmartre and Laura soon followed Lavalley and Letitia and went into the sick room.

Mrs. Arnold raised her head, but said nothing, while Mrs. Rheinberg frowned and muttered between her teeth in a threatening way, but said no more.

The slight, rustling sound induced Lavalley to lift his head, which disturbed Grace and she opened her eyes.

The minister was accustomed to death-bed scenes, but the sight of this crushed and broken lily, and the mute agony of Lavalley, absolutely paralyzed him for the moment. Grace gazed upon him with her dull and faded eyes, but spoke not.

"Grace!" cried the minister. "Divine Master have pity." He held out his hands, she attempted to lift hers, but they fell powerless by her side. He walked up to the side of Lavalley, lifted her cold hand and kissed it reverently, oh, how reverently.

Lavalley, even in the depths of his despair, was touched by this man, who had loved so long without hope, but still experienced such keen and bitter sorrow. The outburst aroused him from his voiceless grief, and caused him to break forth with piercing lamentations. "Woe is me. God has deserted me and will not hear me. Grace, I say, speak to me! I cannot stand it."

"William, I cannot speak much longer. My sands of life are nearly run. Do not grieve so. Up there," and Grace raised her eyes to heaven, "there is hope. In the life eternal, God will join us. You must try to live, and your will must enable you to be contented."

"Grace, all I say is if you die, I shall never be contented; I can never try."

"Lavalley," spoke the minister, calmer now, "in your extreme grief, do you not remember that God governs and regulates all things. He in His wisdom 'doeth all things well.'"

Grace gave the minister a grateful look, and said in a voice broken by deep-drawn sighs: "Dear, kind friend, console him when I am gone. Oh, Arthur," with exquisite tenderness, "forgive the pain that I have caused you. Say you pardon me. I should like to die with an easy conscience."

Unbidden tears sprang to the minister's eyes; he again kissed her hand, and replied: "Angel, it

is I who, by crossing your path, gave you pain; it is I who should ask your forgiveness. You have been and will be the sweetest and brightest vision of my life. Your peace with heaven is made. God receives all the pure in heart as you are. Fear not to pass through the dark valley."

"I am not afraid, good and noble man. I shall soon be with my parents."

"You do not care that you are leaving me here all alone. You will not try to stay," exclaimed Lavallo.

"William, I leave you in the care of my very dear friend, Dr. Montmartre. Your sister, where is she?" asked Grace faintly.

"Dearest, best of mortals," said Laura, walking up, bending and pressing her lips to hers. "Have courage and confidence in God. Your pure mind must feel as David sang, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and staff they comfort me.'"

"The same dear, kind Laura. I wish Sister Louise were here."

"Here am I, blessed sister," answered Sister Louise. She had glided in unperceived and was by the bed at her call.

Lavallo looked with astonishment on this meek, beautiful and sorrowful face. The minister and his sister made room for her, but he would not relinquish his post.

"Dearest and best of women," returned Grace, "whom I expect to meet in heaven. The shadows of death are creeping around me and I shall soon

be in the presence of my Maker. May He receive my soul."

Here audible sobs rang through the room; Lavalley again buried his head and held her hand with convulsive grasp; Sister Louise took the other. Grace sank back exhausted, but with an ineffable smile, the light of heaven playing over her features. Sister Louise crossed herself, imprinted a kiss on the cold brow of Grace and withdrew to the foot of the bed, where she said in a low voice the prayer for the dying.

Dr. Harriot now came in, examined her pulse, found dissolution rapidly approaching, and instantly communicated it to Mr. Rheinberg. The children were summoned as quickly as possible. They came up to the bed sobbing as if their hearts would break, trembling and shuddering at the cold breath of death, and after each had kissed her were quickly dismissed from the room.

Mr. Rheinberg kissed her with all the sorrow of an agonized heart; a slight movement indicated that she felt the warm caress.

"Grace, Grace," cried Lavalley, "speak, speak a word, you must, to—me—one word."

"William," answered she with great effort, "I must go. Do not grieve so. Be reasonable. I am going. Good-bye."

Mrs. Arnold now passionately caressed Grace—her heart was stirred—but there was no response.

"Who will save her?" cried Mrs. Rheinberg, throwing herself on the floor like a child, in her uncontrollable grief and poignant remorse.

"Come, Mrs. Rheinberg," said the physician, "this will not do. Come, you annoy your niece,"

and partly by the fear of being compelled to leave the room and in some measure by persuasion, she grew more composed.

"Grace, open your eyes. Grace, speak to me," reiterated Lavalle.

Grace opened her eyes, one momentary gleam shot through them, one feeble pressure of the hands that Lavalle so firmly, wildly clasped in his own, and she lay with unclosed eyes, but all things fading from her sight.

"Grace, I implore you to speak to me. You must, just once more. Do speak. I shall go mad if you do not," said Lavalle in the most pathetic accents, but no reply came. Her spirit was leaving its earthly tenement and could no longer give response to mortal cries.

"Lavalle," said the minister, "you forget to think of God. 'The Lord chastiseth those whom He loveth.'"

"God have mercy, God has no mercy," alternately shrieked and raved Lavalle.

Mrs. Rheinberg, supported by her husband, was repeating, "Hear, O Israel," the minister with folded hands and tearful eyes repeated again and again, "'He doeth all things well,' receive her into Thy holy Presence," Sister Louise murmured, "Christ, Thou who didst die to redeem the world, forgive her and bring her into the Light Eternal," Dr. Harriot said. "May the Son of God intercede for her," Laura and Mrs. Arnold prayed inaudibly; each petitioned God in his or her own way, and undoubtedly all were acceptably received at the throne of God.

A sudden relaxation of the fingers, which La-

valle held so closely in his own, a slight tremor through the frame, a rigidity of the muscles and all was over with Grace Feld. The parting was made; her gentle spirit had bidden all an everlasting farewell.

Lavalle, with love's fine perception, was first conscious of it; he looked and beheld only the mortal remains of her whom he once fondly dreamed to call his own. He threw himself over her with a wailing cry, the blackness of utter despair in his heart.

It was a harmonious, though sad, solemn and impressive scene. Such a closing tableau is seldom witnessed. Here were represented various denominations, the Jew, the Catholic and the Unitarian, supplicating God for one Jewish soul. Oh, Faith, brotherly love and sympathy, after such a concordant exhibition, a millennium on earth seems possible. Angels must have smiled over this chorus of religious sentiments, which partook of Divine unison. Such fruits of the reconciliation of different religious beliefs will be the euthanasia of atheism. Truly out of death comes life.

"Let me have Grace taken to New York, where my kindred are sleeping," pleaded Lavalle.

"No," answered Mr. Rheinberg, firm for once, "she must rest by the side of her parents in St. Louis."

"Well, you must entrust me with that last sad duty."

"I think it well," said the minister aside, "that

he should have something to occupy his mind, and I hope you will allow him that mournful privilege," which was granted him.

Dressed in the softest and fleeciest of white silk, trimmed in the finest and rarest of old lace, covered with the most fragrant flowers, white jasmine, white hyacinths and tuberoses, with the short, golden curls around her face, in a white satin-lined coffin, ornamented with massive silver, lay Grace.

Numerous friends and many persons whom curiosity attracted came to look upon the corpse ere the metallic coffin was deposited in a wooden box to be conveyed to St. Louis—its final resting place.

"No bride," said Mrs. Gaffry, who came with her babe in her arms and an offering, a crown of pure white roses, "can look more lovely than she does."

"She is now the bride of heaven," said a lady by her side.

"Here comes Sister Louise with some of the boarders," continued Mrs. Gaffry, without returning an answer to the woman, "loaded with flowers."

Some of the pupils of the convent school had begged Mother Therese to allow them "to see dear Sister Catharine" before that angelic face was hidden forever, and none had pleaded more earnestly than Ann Miller, now grown to be the favorite of nuns and scholars.

"I robbed the conservatory of the choicest blossoms to put on your coffin," cried Ann Miller. "Had you," and she looked down at the corpse,

"but remained true to us you would have been an angel and a saint."

"That poor girl," sobbed Mrs. Berkhoff.

"Well, death comes to every one. It makes me think of your poor father," and Mrs. Silverbaum put her handkerchief to her eyes and wept copiously.

"How sweet she looks," observed Mrs. Bennett to a lady friend. "In after years her face will haunt me, and it will be,

"She did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled."

Mr. Everard, my brother-in-law, will be astonished when he comes home."

"Who is that man who grieves so?"

"That must be her lover," returned Mrs. Bennett in a whisper; "he appears to be completely broken down. That other one, with noble mien and sad look, must be a clergyman."

"I think so too. Were you acquainted with the girl?"

"Merely to bow to. But her misfortunes appealed to me so that I was induced to come here, not out of idle curiosity, but out of genuine sympathy."

"You are always true to yourself, Mrs. Bennett."

As the lid was screwed down, the mingled sobs of the people of various denominations went forth as one, the Unitarian minister remarked: "As in life, the air we breathe consists of a union of oxygen and nitrogen, as after death our re-

mains unite with the earth to enrich it, so shall we all be spiritually united before the throne of God. There will be no distinction; only the good and pure in heart of all sects will be selected to enjoy that holy and unalloyed happiness."

When all had gone but Sister Louise and her pupils, she kissed the coffin once more, silently prayed for the dead and made the sign of the cross. The tears streamed down her cheeks.

"Good woman," spoke Lavallo, brokenly, "though through your influence Grace gave up her religion and went into the convent, you saved her from a villain. She loved you and you loved her. May God reward you."

"Yes, holy woman," added the minister, "thy charity and thy goodness are written on thy face. May God continue to bless thee 'with the peace that passeth all understanding.'"

Sister Louise, not accustomed to such words of commendation from strangers, and not much given to conversation with men, merely bowed her head and said, "For Christ our Lord's sake," and silently glided away with her young charges, who accompanied her at the signal of her uplifted hand.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Lavalle, the minister and Laura departed on the same day for St. Louis, carrying with them the remains of dear Grace, to lay them by the side of her sleeping parents. Lavalle immediately gave orders for a magnificent vault to be built. Before it was completed he conceived the poetic idea that if he allowed the body to remain where it was, when it crumbled into dust it would nourish the flowers which he would plant, and in enjoying the fragrance he would be mingling his breath with hers! Therefore the vault was left unfinished; Grace reposed in quiet, and there arose a monument of elegant and artistic beauty, rivaling even the tomb Taj-Mahal, in Secundra, built by the Shah Jehan for his beloved Sultana, Banoo Begum.

"How inconsiderate people are," remarked Lavalle to Dr. Montmartre; "to laugh and enjoy themselves when so many mourn."

"Were you in their position and they in yours, you would act the same. When it is night for some, it is day for others. Every one has light and darkness."

"I hate society, in fact, all people; their unconcern shocks me. Nature, too, robing herself in summer garments of brilliant hues, mocks my woes."

"What would you have? The flowers not to bloom, the trees not to bear fruit, the sun not to shine, and everything below and above to mourn with you?"

"Yes, let all be wrapped in night as I am."

"Ah, my dear friend, nature smiles at our sorrows, knowing that death is but the transition unto life everlasting, and that 'the death of one thing is but the life of another.' From her tears spring plenty and gladness."

"In vain would you comfort me."

"The words of Grace were, 'Console him when I am gone.' She left me that charge as a legacy, and it is one of great price. Dear friend, I have been away from my flock six weeks, and my heart is full of yearning to be at work among them. By ameliorating the troubles and griefs of others, I moderate my own. Come and assist me."

"I cannot help you now, but take me along, do with me what you will."

"Your heart will yet be softened," responded the minister, warmly grasping Lavalley by the hand, "and you will bow your head in submission to the Divine will. We will start without delay," and he told Laura that Lavalley had consented to go with them.

"It will be much better for him; these continual visits to the cemetery are too much. His grief will never be assuaged here."

After some weeks at the parsonage, the minister said to Lavalley: "You must throw off this lethargy and continual meditation. It is deadly, nay, a thousand times worse than death. Make haste, uncoil this cobra before it is too late."

"It is insanity to which you refer," replied he, gloomily. "If it would make of my mind a *tabula rosa*, I should welcome it with open arms."

"Think, William Lavalle, of the many similarly afflicted," answered the minister solemnly.

"That does not make my trouble easier to bear. I prayed so for her life. I would have done so much charity had she not died. And were there not others whom the world could spare? Some would not even be mourned, some whose death would relieve relatives or the public, to whom they are a burden. The lunatics, the imbeciles, the infirm, the maimed, the thieves, the forgers, the murderers, God could have taken them all and made a holocaust of them, and left my pure, innocent, gentle girl who knew no wrong. She was taken in the spring of her life. She is indispensable to me. I cannot live without her. How could God be so cruel? Why did he not listen to my prayers?"

"Vain, presumptuous man! who art thou, who darest to combat in argument with the Creator? Is it for thee to know the purposes of the Lord, and dost think thou art debating and reasoning with man, that thou canst induce Him to see with thine eyes; that prayers, entreaties or promises will appease His wrath or occasion Him to alter His will? No; when the fiat of the great Architect goes forth, prayers are not so efficacious in reversing or modifying it. The laws of nature and nature's God are immutable and inexorable; in our impotency and despair we cannot avoid appealing to Him to revoke His commands, but

none is repealed. Prayers should be for guidance and strength, and resignation to the Divine will."

"But I suffer," rejoined Lavalley at the clergyman's vehemence.

"To be sure you do, but he who can say 'He doeth all things well,' and quell the murmurings of his rebellious heart, that person is a believer in God, in His wisdom, goodness and justice. If the Creator were to listen to individual prayers, it would be absolutely incompatible with order; the world would be in a state of anarchy and chaos. The person with weak vision would not want much light, the one with strong eyes would desire a great deal; the man who had harvested his crops would want rain, the one who had not vice versa, and God, metaphorically speaking, would have His hands filled with briefs like a Judge to inquire which cases were right and which were wrong. From the tribunal of God there is no appeal; it is supreme. Therefore, my friend, let us pray that our hearts be filled with the grace of submission, and let us humble and resign ourselves with the entire strength of our intellects to His holy and unchangeable will. Are you doing as Grace would have you do? Go, do good, divert your thoughts by assuaging the grief of the poor and lonely. Such actions will repay and render you worthy to be the companion of Grace in after years. Do not delay, begin the work at once."

"I shall, my friend. The spirit of my beloved Grace gives me courage. I shall do as you bid me; only give me time."

"I should be your enemy if I were to give you

one day more to nurse your morbid grief. No, not one hour, can I let you have. Take immediate interest in what is passing around you."

"I shall try for your sake. Where can I find a better example than in you? I may falter, but you must stretch out your hand to keep me from falling."

"My support shall not be lacking, but, dear friend, I do not think you will require assistance long. I have faith in your strength and will."

And Lavalley at once applied himself to philanthropic work with the morbid intensity of the Buddhist saint; rendering personal service, going among the lowliest, giving most generously anywhere and everywhere, and neglecting himself. After some months Lavalley said to the minister, "Do you know, that for the sake of dear Grace, I wish to consecrate myself to God, good works and mankind."

"A very laudable desire."

"And I shall commence, with your permission, to study theology with my tutelar saint, the Rev. Dr. Montmartre."

"Ah! Lavalley, you know how welcome you are to all I know and all I have."

"I, who owe you so much, appreciate your mind and your heart."

Lavalley remained with the minister until he became thoroughly familiar with the Unitarian doctrine. Subsequently he traveled to Europe and studied under the most eminent of the liberal Jewish divines, and he was ordained to teach the eternal truths to mankind.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"Why, Mark," said Mrs. Everard, "this is the anniversary of our wedding."

"So ; a year ago we were married, went traveling, remained two months, and have been in this dear, happy home ever since. We have been supremely happy, dear wife."

"And you have been," added Mrs. Everard, nestling closer to him, "one of the most loving of husbands, the most devoted of sons-in-law. In fact, father gets angry at Charlie if he calls you a son-in-law. 'He is my much beloved son. Mark is a treasure,' says father. What a glorious year this has been!"

"Dear Amelia, I have worked in accordance with your program, have I not?"

"You have done more than I thought possible."

"I have exceeded your expectations, have I, darling Amelia?"

"Yes, you have not only gratified me, enraptured my father, delighted Alice and Charlie, but amazed the whole town. Such is the wonderful genius and cleverness of my Mark, now Judge Everard. You have accomplished all this in a very short time, while I have literally done nothing."

"Nothing, Amelia? Could I have ever reached the goal without you and your friends' assistance?"

Was I not ready to give up in despair when I was so bitterly attacked by two newspapers? One organ, I believe, was expressly founded to vituperate me, and I might have succumbed to its influence had it not been for the editor of one daily paper, who was not only the political but the social friend of *our* dear father, and whose wisdom and sagacity secured my election."

"You underrate your intellect. It was your own noble self with your profound and large views, your liberal ideas and incorruptible morals which gained this distinction for you."

"Your love would make you see me in a *rara-vis*. But at all events I have fulfilled my promises and made you Mrs. Judge Everard."

"You mean you have made me the wife of a Judge—but I have alienated your best friend."

"Who is that?"

"Mr. Berkhoff, Mark. He will not call."

"That is his fault, not mine or yours. He is always friendly, but——"

"Cannot forgive you," said Mrs. Everard, as her husband hesitated to proceed.

"Well, and if so? Is it not light and warm as long as you love me? And, Amelia, it would be dark and cold without that," returned Everard, kissing her tenderly.

"You will as long as you live, then, be surrounded by a warm atmosphere, for my love will never fail you."

"Thanks, my darling. The Divine spark of love is a radiance which emanates from Him and lives in the soul."

"Mark, do you know that ever since we came

back from our bridal tour, and I heard of the recantation and death of poor Grace Feld, I have been meditating about religion."

"Aha! have you?"

"I do not believe any more in the creed of my fathers."

"Amelia, my heart is quivering with suspense; quick, tell me, what do you believe?" and Everard clasped his wife's hands and looked excitedly into her face.

"I believe," returned Mrs. Everard, pale with emotion, "in the one eternal God, creator of the universe."

"Do you believe in the immortality of the soul?"

"Yes, I do."

"So do I, Amelia. Do you believe in the resurrection of the body?"

"No."

"Neither do I, my precious wife, you are no Christian, I no Jew, we are simply Monotheists, believers in God and in immortality.

"I thank Thee, my heavenly Father," exclaimed Everard, with passionate tenderness, "that my much beloved wife and I can bow before Thy throne with one heart, one soul, one mind; that we are united in everything that can render mortals happy. May we ever appear before Thy holy presence in love and harmony."

"Amen," returned Mrs. Everard, throwing her arms fondly around his neck.

"I thought, my darling, I was supremely happy before, but now I have no words to express myself; it is beatification. I am so happy that I am

going to call on Mr. and Mrs. Berkhoff. I can afford to humble myself a little. I must not forget his disinterested friendship and his kindness to me when I first arrived here. I have often told you about it. And he is one of the most honest of men. He values his reputation as highly as Cassio did his, and considers it 'the immortal part of himself,' though he does not give expression of his feelings in those words. Mrs. Berkhoff, though none too refined, possesses a good heart and is a very sensible person."

"Go to see them by all means. Never forget old friends. Maybe Mr. and Mrs. Berkhoff can be induced to see me in a different light now."

"Are you talking about me," asked Mrs. Bennett, coming in with a glow on her cheeks.

"No, my dear sister-in-law."

"You must have the law in, my venerable judge," said Mrs. Bennett, laughing.

"And you, my dear sister, always cheerful and happy."

"How can I be otherwise, Mark, with such a darling hubby as I have, such a father, such a sister, and such a distinguished *brother*. Indeed, what should I be but happy?"

"With your disposition," added her sister, "you will never grow old."

"Well, I have a perfect horror of old age. Imagine Charlie and I coming to see you limping, half blind, toothless and shriveled!"

"Why, Alice, what a picture you sketch! Father is no longer young. I am sure before he was paralyzed his form was erect, now he is a little

bent, but with his soft, silvery hair, mild eyes and ruddy complexion, he is still a pleasing person."

"Father," cried Mrs. Bennett, "is not what I call real old, and then there are two kinds of old age—one such as I have described and the other noble, grand, sweet and loving, clothed in the soft sparkle of a good life. But Charlie and I are not of the dignified sort. Pshaw! You never asked why I came to-day. How forgetful you are."

"To see if we are alive or not, I suppose," answered Mr. Everard.

"Nothing of the kind; I heard it whispered among the birds that Judge Everard and his wife were to be surprised by their friends this evening, their marriage anniversary. How much for my secret?"

"A kiss," answered Mr. and Mrs. Everard.

"I demand instant payment, then," replied Mrs. Bennett smiling.

"You shall have it," and her brother-in-law kissed her without delay.

"You shall have a dozen, my dear Alice, on this blessed day. Here and here go the kisses," said her sister, imprinting them over her face.

"What would Charlie say, I wonder!" and Mrs. Bennett shook her head and contracted her brow, as if she were apprehensive of consequences.

"I know a bird who told you about this evening's surprise," said Mrs. Everard, "and the bird's name is Charlie Bennett."

"You are right there, Amelia. Well, it was so droll that some one should tell Charlie, and, of course, he came directly home and told me."

"Amelia, to-day we are remembered by God and man," said Everard.

A few evenings after the brilliant surprise party given to Judge Everard and his wife, the former called at Berkhoff's house.

"Well, Everard, is it you?" said Mr. Berkhoff.

"Have you concluded to come and see us once again?" added Mrs. Berkhoff, giving him her hand to shake.

"Oh, heavens, it's the Judge!" said Mrs. Silverbaum.

"You are a big man now, Everard—Judge, I should say. I suppose you are proud," and Berkhoff looked at him reproachfully.

"No, old friends are always the same."

"But changes take place," added Mrs. Berkhoff, "and then what?"

"We do not recognize them," answered Everard quietly.

"Then you will be glad to hear that I have paid off the last cent of my debts and that my business is in a splendid condition."

"Glad? I am overjoyed at your success. Your honesty deserves all credit."

"There is more than that," resumed Mrs. Berkhoff, blushing. "His creditors, in appreciation of his honesty, have sent him a magnificent gold watch. I have no doubt it gratified us as much as your grand party did you and your wife. My husband is as great in my eyes as you are to your wife, for they said it was a rare thing to pay as he has done, dollar for dollar and interest, too."

"And they remarked I must have a good wife to have enabled me to do it. Everard, I owe you much."

"And I," added Mrs. Berkhoff, "owe you everything."

"My good friends," responded Everard, much touched by these expressions, "you exaggerate trifles. Berkhoff, remember that I am indebted to you for your kindness in times when clients and friends were rare——"

"I beg you not to mention it."

"Well, then we shall remain silent on both sides."

"Rebecca, bring out our boy."

"He is sleeping. He is a beautiful child, and is just like his father."

"He is a wonderful baby, a little king, with such lovely features, exactly like my own Rebecca," added Berkhoff, triumphantly.

"I regret I was not godfather to this fine creature."

"Your own fault. You are so distant since you are married; besides, what would I do by the side of your grand friends?"

"Mrs. Everard," said Mrs. Berkhoff, timidly, "was always a very haughty person; she never fancied our race, you know."

"Oh, yes she did," returned Everard laughing, "she married one of our people."

"She imagines you an exception," answered Mrs. Berkhoff, somewhat bitterly.

"Friends," replied Everard, "you do my wife an injustice. You may think my love magnifies things, but I do assure you a more refined, a more

noble woman does not live than my Amelia. A better wife does not breathe than she is, and there is not a happier man living than I am."

"A gold mine!" ironically said Mrs. Silverbaum sotto voice.

"I am glad that you are happy. Rebecca, we must call on Mrs. Everard some time," added Berkhoff.

"Certainly, if you say so, we shall go."

"You see what a heart, Mr. Everard, Berkhoff has," remarked Mrs. Silverbaum. "He is so good he feels for everybody. A gold mine!"

"I hear," said Berkhoff cautiously, "that your wife does not go to church very often."

"Let me assure you; on religion as in all things, we are agreed."

"Has she or will she turn?" asked Berkhoff breathlessly.

"No."

"Have you gone over to her religion?"

"No, but we worship one God, believe in right thinking, right doing and in the imperishableness of the soul; nothing more."

"Ah, Everard!" returned Berkhoff sadly, "it is nearly as bad as I feared."

"Say no more. Nothing can dampen my happiness. Amelia and I stand in the full light of God's goodness and I hope we shall remain so until we enter the gates of Paradise."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

After residing several years abroad Lavalle returned to the United States, traveling through the principal cities of the East, and then visited his old friend, Rev. Dr. Montmartre, who received him with open arms.

"Well, dear friend," asked the minister, "what have you been doing since your arrival in this country?"

"I have been preaching, and when I could not get that opportunity, lecturing on Reformed Judaism, a religion which has in it all the essence of old Judaism, but is shorn of all unnecessary ceremonies and appendages. I wish to change it from its chrysalis state and render it a pure adoration of God, the supreme Ruler, which, like the north star, guides the mariner to a harbor of safety and rest."

"I observe," returned the clergyman, "your tendency is to curtail——" but here, woman-like, Laura interrupted by asking Lavalle if he had heard of Mrs. Arnold, and when a negative was the reply, she said:

"What I heard from a lady recently arrived from D—, her character must have undergone a complete metamorphosis. She is kind and loving to her relatives, and, though poor, is actively employed in doing what good she can. It seems 'the

way of the transgressor' has been hard and she has turned to the easier and better road of veracity, goodness and conscientiousness. Mr. Rheinberg is still struggling; fortune is chary with him."

"I shall make that family comfortable. All I retain my wealth for is to distribute it where it will be productive of the most good."

"I perceive," responded Laura warmly, "that in your religion charity is no idle word, but you write it in indelible characters."

"Please do not praise me, Miss Montmartre. I shall send a check for ten thousand to Mr. Rheinberg, because he was kind to my cherished Grace. I shall also send a similar sum to him to be given to any worthy person for whom my beloved Grace entertained an affection, and your poor, my beneficent, loving friends, shall not be forgotten."

"Excellent man!" said Laura, with tears in her eyes, "that cardinal virtue, charity, is well exemplified in you."

"My dear brother——"

"Say no more," interrupted Lavallo. "To be worthy to be called your brother is sufficient reward."

The minister humbly bowed his acknowledgments and shook Lavallo's hand with deep emotion. His heart was overflowing, but no words issued from his lips.

When Mr. Rheinberg received the check from Mr. Lavallo for some deserving person, he wisely concluded to give it to Mrs. Gaffry, who had been an intimate friend of Grace, and whose

husband had lately died and left her with two children in indigent circumstances.

This action of the Jewish (called Monotheistic) minister received much commendation, but popular esteem was augmented tenfold, and it was the theme for newspaper comment, when it became known that out of gratitude to Sister Louise, for her gentleness and love to Grace, the convent was endowed with an annuity of ten thousand dollars as long as she should live. Upon this pleasing intelligence the good nun bowed her meek head, shed a tear for her dead friend, prayed daily for her and Lavalley, and thanked God for his goodness.

Lavalley received a call from an extremely liberal congregation in St. Louis, and as he left the minister said: "I accept it with gratitude to God, from whom all blessings flow, for in that city, in endless slumber reposes my adored one. I shall labor in the Lord's vineyard until he summon me into His presence; then, like a wearied child, I hope to sleep on the breast of mother earth by the side of my darling and much beloved Grace."

When Lavalley's parishioners heard of the sad events of his life they sympathized in his melancholy, esteemed and loved his good, noble character and his pure and broad religion. Every afternoon when time permitted—for his duties were paramount to his feelings—he could be found prostrated over the grave of Grace, breathing the perfume of the flowers and crying, "Oh, God, how long till my dust be mingled with hers."

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Among the sweets he had to treasure was the annual token of remembrance from the minister and Laura, who appreciated him for his personal worth as well as for his generosity to their parishioners.

After years of unceasing toil, gaining wisdom and fame, Lavalley, looking exhausted, was implored by his loving congregation to take some relaxation from his labors. Acting upon their kind wishes, where should his footsteps wander but to his much esteemed and beloved friend, Dr. Montmartre? And there was Laura, still by her brother's side, happy, serene and beautiful, the admirable goodness of her heart showing in her face, her self-sacrifice and charitable works encircling her with a light more brilliant than that which scintillates from a crown of diamonds. This walk with her brother along life's pilgrimage was an exquisitely touching offering.

The two ministers felt assured that their dreary days of waiting for the white-winged messenger would soon be over, that they would ere long be summoned into the life everlasting.

"My dear Lavalley," said Dr. Montmartre, "have you found in your progressive and iconoclastic ideas more resistance than you thought?"

"My path is rough and unhewn and not always strewn with rose leaves. I am often not only called deistic, but atheistic. Some of my co-religionists, who have been most lax in religious observances, raise their voices the loudest and call me, in derision, 'The New Messiah!' But I

never wander from God, Right thinking, Humanity and Immortality."

"Your courage must not fail you. Do you know, in studying the theology of Buddha, I have often suspected that our great Christian religion has borrowed from it. Buddhism levels the barriers between castes, enjoins the loving of one's enemies, the conquering of passions, the practice of virtues, and more, the toleration of all other beliefs. How I wish that my pure and simple faith would eventually grow to a large tree, like the noble Banian, each branch descending to the ground, taking root and finally shading and encircling the world."

"Why, brother, what enthusiast in art, science or religion has not had such Utopian dreams?"

"Do not oaks from little acorns grow? As Savonarola would have made 'Italy, nay the world, one vast cloister,' so should I like to consolidate the world into one great religion."

"But this," remonstrated Laura, "is a vast, gigantic idea, utterly beyond the compass of any one mind and requiring ages for its accomplishment."

"The idea of a uniform belief in God, and the immortality of the soul in conjunction with the precepts of Moses, Jesus and other great teachers so that all may dwell together in concord, and so that no difference of creeds will exist to intervene and destroy human happiness, is to me a beautiful one. If my brother Lavallo and I can only plant the seed of this conception of a universal harmony, it will go on as surely as the

propagation of sounds, and in future generations it will sweep all before it, as it is the trend of the times."

"It is," said the minister, Lavalle and Laura simultaneously, "The Irresistible Current."

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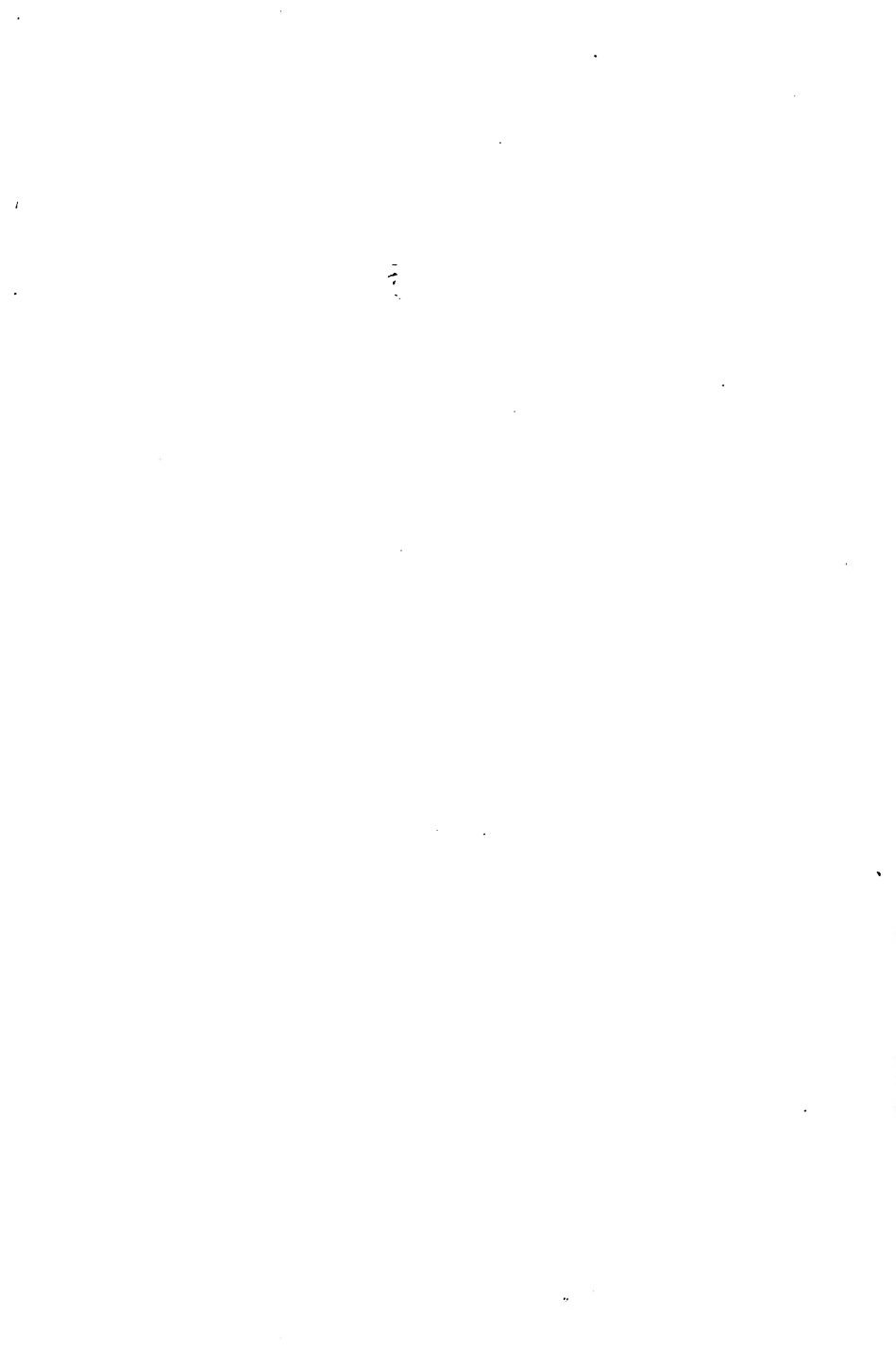
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